



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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THE LIBERTY BOYS IN TROUBLE! OR, A BAD RUN OF LUCK.

By HARRY MOORE



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CHAPTER I.

DICK SLATER, THE BOY SPY.

On the 28th day of November, of the year 1776, a horseman came dashing into Newark, New Jersey, at the top of his horse's speed. The animal was foaming, showing that he had been ridden hard and fast, and the rider, a youth of not more than eighteen years, brought his mount to a sudden stop in front of a house near the center of the town, and leaping to the ground, hastened up the steps and knocked on the door.

It was opened a few moments later, and the youth said, quickly and excitedly:

"I wish to see the commander-in-chief at once."

"He is engaged at present," was the reply. "The members of the staff are with him."

"That does not matter; the business I have with him is of the utmost importance," was the youth's reply.

The man, who was dressed like an orderly, hesitated.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"My name is Dick Slater."

The man started.

"Ah, you are the Dick Slater who has made his name so well known by doing spy work?"

"I am the only Dick Slater that I have ever heard of, and I have just come in from some scouting and I have important information for the commander-in-chief."

"Come in," invited the orderly. "I will inform the commander-in-chief that you are here, and likely he will see you at once."

"No doubt of it."

Then the youth who had said his name was Dick Slater entered the house and took a seat on a chair in the hall, while the orderly made his way to the private room of the commander-in-chief to inform him of the presence of the young patriot spy and scout.

At the time of which we write the patriot army, under General Washington, was at Newark, New Jersey.

The British had captured Forts Washington and Lee, on opposite sides of the Hudson, near the north end of Manhattan Island, and the patriot army had been forced to cross the river into New Jersey and retreat southward.

The army was now at Newark, and the British army was known to be getting ready to follow and strike a hard blow, if possible to do so.

So far in the War of the Revolution the British had had the better of it.

But General Washington was not beaten yet, by any means, and even while retreating across New Jersey, with a handful of men in the little army, as compared to the force of the British, he was planning to even up things with the enemy.

Dick Slater, the youth already introduced to the reader's notice, was a handsome fellow, and he was as brave and daring as he was good looking.

His father had been shot down in his own yard only about four months before, and Dick, after shooting and mortally wounding the man who had killed his father, organized a company of one hundred youths of the neighborhood in which he lived, and had gone to New York and joined the patriot army.

The "Liberty Boys," as they called themselves, had fought bravely at the battle of Long Island, at Harlem Heights, White Plains, at Fort Washington, and elsewhere, and had already earned a great reputation for bravery and dashing work on the field of battle; while Dick had in addition to this done some extremely clever and daring scout and spy work for General Washington on a number of occasions, and had made a reputation as a spy that was ahead of that of any other spy in the patriot army.

And he deserved all the credit that had been given him, for he was a brave, modest fellow, capable of good work, and cool, keen, and daring under any and all circumstances.

He did not have to sit there long ere the orderly was back.

"Come, Mr. Slater," said he. "The commander-in-chief will see you at once."

The youth rose and accompanied the orderly.

A few moments later he was ushered into the presence of General Washington and the members of his staff.

They had been holding a council of war.

All knew Dick, and greeted him cordially.

"Be seated, Dick," invited the commander-in-chief, and then, as the youth took a seat, he went on: "You told the orderly that you bring news of importance?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"What is the news?" with eagerness.

"The British are advancing, sir!"

"Say you so, my boy?" exclaimed Washington.

"Yes, sir; they are marching this way as rapidly as possible."

"How far away are they?"

"About six miles."

"So near as that?"

"Yes, sir."

"And how strong a force is it, do you think, my boy?"

"I should estimate the force at six thousand, sir."

"Nearly double our own number of men," remarked General Washington musingly.

Then he turned to his officers.

"What do you think, gentlemen?" he asked. "Shall we remain and attempt to offer battle, or shall we continue the retreat?"

There was considerable discussion, and at last it was decided to retreat.

This having been decided upon, no time was lost.

The commander-in-chief sent out orders for the patriots to break camp at once and get ready to march at the earliest possible moment.

Soon all was bustle and confusion.

The patriot soldiers were not eager to enter into a battle with a superior force of the enemy.

They were not in good condition for this.

They were poorly clad, and the weather was sharp. They had scarcely a pair of whole shoes among them, and a great many were practically barefooted.

They had not enough muskets for all, and were even somewhat short on powder and bullets.

Nor did they have very much in the way of rations.

So, while marching over the frozen ground with practically no foot-covering was hard and painful work, it was preferable to giving battle to the enemy under such disadvantages as they would labor under, they decided:

So they got ready for the march with alacrity.

When all were in readiness the army set out.

It marched slowly and toilsomely away toward the south.

At the head rode Washington and his officers, and they made their horses go slowly, for they did not wish to cause the men to march faster than was necessary.

Bringing up the rear were Dick Slater and his company of "Liberty Boys."

They were mounted, having secured horses, and they had already done a lot of good work as a result of being mounted and capable of getting around over the country at a rapid pace.

They had struck many a small party of British unexpected blows, when they could not possibly have done so, had they not been mounted.

General Washington told Dick to bring up the rear, and had instructed him to do scouting work, and thus make it impossible for the British to get close enough to the vanguard of the patriot army to do any damage.

Onward marched the footsore and weary patriot army.

At the rear rode "The Liberty Boys of '76."

They talked as they rode along, and while they were young, and as a general thing were lively and full of fun, there was no lively talk on this day, for they could not think of anything save the sufferings of the foot soldiers.

In many places could be seen blood from their cuts and lacerated feet.

"Isn't that terrible, Dick!" remarked Bob Estabrook, Dick Slater's righthand man, and a friend and chum of many years, they having been neighbors all their lives; as he spoke he pointed to a bloody imprint of a foot on the ground.

"It is, indeed, Bob!" was the sober reply.

"Yes, it is terrible," said Bob; "but it proves one thing very satisfactorily to my mind."

"What, Bob?"

"That men who will undergo such hardships and suffering will not permit themselves to be beaten. I am sure that such men cannot be conquered, Dick, and that in the end the patriots will triumph, and that we shall ultimately be free and independent."

"I feel that way about it, too, Bob."

"We certainly have the right side in this war," went on Bob, "and right usually triumphs in the end, doesn't it?"

"I think so, Bob."

The "Liberty Boys" kept a sharp lookout behind them, and occasionally Dick and Bob rode back a mile or so, and scouted around to see if the British had sent any detachments forward on the double-quick, to make an attempt at striking the rear of the patriot army.

They did not discover any such detachments, however, and when they reached Elizabethtown that evening nothing had been seen of any portion of the British army.

General Washington did not for one moment doubt that the enemy was pursuing his army, however, and he placed out a double line of sentinels, so as to make sure there would be no surprise during the night.

CHAPTER II.

DICK CAPTURED.

The enemy did not show up that night, and next morning the patriot army continued its retreat, heading toward New Brunswick.

It was slow work, and the soldiers toiled onward all day long; when evening came it was still several miles to New Brunswick.

Again the army went into camp, and again a double line of sentinels was placed out.

As before, the night passed quietly.

The enemy did not put in an appearance.

Doubtless the British were having a hard time getting along over the rough country roads; but one thing is sure, they did not have to walk barefooted, and leave blood on the frozen ground, as was the case with many of the patriots.

Next morning the patriot army again broke camp and continued the retreat.

New Brunswick was reached shortly after noon, and

General Washington called a halt, to let his men rest and recuperate.

Some provisions were obtained here, and some shoes for the soldiers, and some clothing.

A sharp lookout was kept for the British, but they did not put in an appearance during the afternoon, and it was decided to remain all night in New Brunswick, where the soldiers could be fairly comfortable.

Soon after dark Dick Slater rode out of the town, and headed toward the north.

He was going on a scouting and spying expedition.

There was little doubt that the British were within a few miles of New Brunswick, but General Washington wished to know just how far they were away.

So he had sent Dick to find out.

Onward he rode at a gallop for a couple of miles, and then he slackened the speed of his horse to a walk.

"I may be getting near the British encampment," he said to himself, "and I don't want to ride right into the picket-lines."

So he proceeded slowly and cautiously for perhaps another mile.

Then he brought his horse to a stop, and listened long and earnestly.

He could not hear a sound to indicate the presence of an army anywhere in the vicinity.

Then he rode onward till he came to the top of a hill.

Here he paused, and sitting in the saddle, gazed long and searchingly ahead.

In the distance he saw what he believed was the reflection thrown up by camp-fires.

"Yes, that must be it," he said to himself. "The British are there, and I should judge the camp is a mile or more away."

He rode onward then.

He held his horse down to a slow walk, for he felt that he was in danger when venturing so close to the British encampment.

He wished to make sure that the reflection he saw was that of the light from the camp-fires of the enemy, however, and so he moved steadily forward.

When he was within half a mile, as he judged, of the point he was heading for, Dick dismounted, and tying his horse to a tree at one side of the road, but back a ways in the timber, he stole onward on foot.

This was work in which Dick was thoroughly at home.

All his life he had been accustomed to roaming through the timber, and he had become almost as expert at this sort of work, from stealing up to get a shot at wild game of all kinds, as the redmen of the forest.

Onward he stole.

He made frequent pauses, and listened.

Hearing nothing to indicate the presence of the enemy, at any of the times, he kept on.

At last he came to a point where, through a sort of opening in the forest, he got a glimpse of the British encampment.

He could see one camp-fire, and the soldiers sitting around it, talking.

The "Liberty Boy" listened intently.

Over toward the right he heard the sound of footsteps, and decided that there was a sentinel there.

Then at seemingly about the same distance to the left he heard footsteps.

There was another sentinel there, Dick decided.

He figured that he was about midway between the two, and so he stole forward a few steps farther.

For once Dick made a mistake.

A British officer happened to be standing leaning against a huge tree, gazing toward the camp-fires within the encampment in an abstracted manner.

The truth was he was a young officer who had left a sweetheart back in England, and he was homesick, and had been making a practice of going off to himself of evenings, and thinking and dreaming of his sweetheart till sleep drove him to his blanket.

He heard the faint rustling of leaves, and glanced around, without moving.

He saw a dark figure glide past him, and at once guessed that it was that of a "rebel" spy.

Acting on the impulse of the moment, the officer drew a pistol, but instead of firing it, he took hold of the muzzle and taking a quick step forward, dealt Dick a blow on the head with the butt of the weapon.

The "Liberty Boy" was not expecting anything of this kind.

The officer was standing so silent and motionless that the youth had not discovered his presence.

The first intimation he had of danger was when he felt the blow on his head.

He felt the pain of the blow, saw seemingly a thousand stars shooting in as many directions, and then sunk to the ground unconscious.

The "Liberty Boy" had certainly gotten himself into trouble.

The officer gave utterance to an exclamation of satisfaction.

"Good!" he murmured. "I fixed that fellow all right, and now I'll just carry him into the camp, and see who and what he is."

Thrusting the pistol back in his belt, the redcoat stooped, and lifted Dick's body in his arms.

The officer was a muscular fellow, and seemed to have no difficulty in lifting his victim.

With the youth in his arms he walked into the encampment, and as soon as he was seen and it was noted that he was carrying a form in his arms, the British soldiers became excited, and quickly gathered around him, asking all manner of questions.

"Who is he?"

"Where did you find him?"

"What is the matter with him?"

"Is he a rebel?"

"Is he dead?"

The officer, who wore the uniform of a lieutenant, made no reply at once to any of the questions, but placed the insensible youth on a blanket near one of the camp-fires and stepping back, took a look at his face.

"Not a bad-looking young fellow," he remarked.

"No," replied one of the soldiers. "What ails him?"

"I cracked him over the head with the butt of my pistol."

"Ah, you did?"

"Yes."

"What was he doing?"

"He was sneaking up toward the encampment."

"Then he must be a spy!"

"That is what I thought."

"Yes, there can be no doubt regarding that."

"Well, he made a mistake this time. I wonder who he is?"

"I don't know. He looks rather a young fellow for such dangerous work as spying."

The news that Lieutenant Hunter had captured a "rebel" spy traveled throughout the encampment very quickly, and soon the officers were pushing their way into the midst of the crowd surrounding the insensible youth.

"Make way here," cried an orderly. "Make way for General Howe!"

The soldiers fell back, opening up a path for the officer, and at his heels was General Cornwallis, and following him were several other officers.

"Where is this rebel spy you have captured?" General Howe asked; and then, as his eyes fell upon the pale face of the unconscious youth, he added:

"Ah, here he is."

The officers gathered around the blanket on which lay the insensible "Liberty Boy," and looked at him searchingly.

"I know him," suddenly exclaimed General Howe. "I have seen the young man before, but his being pale makes him look somewhat different, and I did not recognize him at first glance."

"Who is he?" asked General Cornwallis.

"He is Dick Slater!" was the reply.

"You don't mean it?"

"Dick Slater, you say?"

"The notorious rebel spy?"

"Are you sure it is he?"

Such were some of the exclamations from the lips of the officers.

Of course, the common soldiers made no remarks, but they stared from General Howe to the face of the prisoner with looks of wonder on their own faces.

They knew he was a famous "rebel" spy.

"Yes, it is Dick Slater," said General Howe, decidedly.

"There can be no mistake. Lieutenant Hunter, you have done well in capturing this young rascal."

"I am glad, sir," was the reply.

"How came you to make the capture?"

The lieutenant explained.

"Well, well! He was spying on us, and but for the

accident of your presence, standing silent and motionless against the tree, he would have succeeded in doing his work and getting away in safety, for he is a sly rascal, and is equal to any Indian in woodcraft."

"You are right, sir," said the lieutenant. "I had no idea there was anyone other than our sentinels anywhere near me until he almost brushed my elbow."

"Oh, he is an expert woodsman, and one of the most successful and dangerous spies in the rebel army. I am very, very glad that you captured him. Now bring him to, if possible, for I wish to question him."

Some of the soldiers went to work, and it was not long before the youth was showing signs of returning consciousness.

Then a little brandy was forced between his lips, and soon afterward Dick opened his eyes and looked around him.

He gazed up in the faces of the officers and soldiers for a few moments, a puzzled look in his eyes, and then of a sudden a look of understanding came over his face.

"Ah, I remember now," he said. "Somebody hit me over the head with a pistol butt."

"You are right, Dick Slater," said General Howe. "You are a prisoner!"

CHAPTER III.

DICK IN TROUBLE.

"A prisoner!" exclaimed Dick, with a capital assumption of astonishment.

"Yes."

"But why make a prisoner of me? And why apply the name of Dick Slater to me? I am not Dick Slater; my name is Ralph Farmer."

General Howe shook his head.

He was not to be deceived by the youth's denial.

He had seen Dick before, on two or three occasions, and was confident that he had made no mistake.

He was sure he had the famous "rebel" spy in his power, and was not disposed to let him get out again.

"Very well acted, my boy," he said, "but it won't do. I know you, and know you are Dick Slater, so you might as well make up your mind that there is no hope for you."

"Why, what will you do to me?"

The youth had a pretty good idea what they would do to him.

He felt sure that they would either shoot or hang him, and felt that he was indeed in trouble, but he thought he might as well plead ignorance to gain time.

"Ah, you wish to know what we will do to you?" remarked General Howe.

"Yes."

"Well, we will either shoot you or hang you. It will be decided which later."

"I assure you that you are making a mistake in my case, sire," said Dick, "and that if you shoot or hang me you will be wronging an innocent man."

"We'll risk that," with a smile. "Men, bind the prisoner's arms and lead him to the guard-house."

Two or three of the soldiers seized hold of Dick and quickly bound his arms, and then General Howe said to Dick:

"I suppose your army is at New Brunswick, is it not?"

"Whose army? I have no army, sir," replied Dick.

"Bah! it is folly to try to keep that up, Dick Slater. I know you, and you cannot deceive me. You will not tell me where the rebel army is, then?"

"If I were Dick Slater do you think I would do so?" asked Dick.

"No, I don't think you would. Well, you need not, for I am sure the rebel army is at New Brunswick."

Then the British general ordered the soldiers to conduct the prisoner to the guard-house, and place him therein.

This was done, and soon the brave "Liberty Boy" was occupying a dark little room in the building all alone.

"Well, this isn't very pleasant," he said to himself.

He had not expected to get into trouble when he started out, but had done so just the same.

This went to show the dangers attendant upon the work of a scout and spy.

The youth began working at his bonds, and soon found that his wrists were not very tightly bound.

He believed he could get them free.

That would make it a bit more comfortable for him at any rate, so he went to work.

He pulled and tugged with all his strength.

The bonds gradually loosened up, and at last Dick got his wrists free.

He was delighted.

He breathed more freely.

It was something to have his arms free, even if he was in the guard-house, a prisoner.

With unfettered hand and feet he did not feel so much like a helpless prisoner.

Then he began wondering if it would be possible for him to make his escape from the place.

He tried the door, but found it locked.

He examined the one window, but in the darkness could not see how it was fastened. All he knew was that it was securely fastened.

"I guess I'm in for it," the youth said to himself. "There does not seem to be much chance for escaping from this place."

He paced the floor, and thought of his "Liberty Boys," and wondered what they would think and do when he failed to return within a reasonable time.

They would come very near charging right into the heart of the British encampment if they knew I was a prisoner here," he told himself.

Again he tried the door and window.

They would not give. They were tightly fastened.

"It is no use. I'm here to stay!" he told himself.

He felt his way to where there was a single cot, at one side of the room.

He sat down, and gave himself up to his reflections.

They were not of the most pleasant character.

He did not feel very good over being captured by the British.

And now, being a prisoner, what was he to do?

The "Liberty Boy" did not see clearly how he was to do anything.

He would not despair, however. He would keep his courage up. Something might turn up to help him.

He had been sitting there half an hour, when he heard footsteps outside the door.

The door rattled, and he heard what sounded like a key rattling in the lock.

Someone was coming.

The "Liberty Boy" was struck by an idea.

Leaping up, he tip-toed to the door, and placed himself just back of where it would be when opened.

There was a clicking sound as the key turned in the lock, and then the door opened, and a British soldier, carrying a lantern in his hand, entered the room.

He looked toward the cot at the farther side of the room first, and seeing no one, said:

"Where are you, anyway?"

At the same time he started to turn around, and as he did so Dick dealt him a powerful blow full on the jaw.

Without a sound the redcoat collapsed, and sank to the floor, the lantern dropping out of his hand.

Dick seized the lantern, and pushed the door shut, and fastened it.

Then he quickly stripped the British soldier's red coat off, doffed his own coat, donned the red one, and was ready to make a desperate break for liberty.

He had donned the redcoat's headgear, also, and pulling it down over his eyes, he suddenly opened the door, and leaping out, ran hastily toward a group of redcoats gathered about a camp-fire. As he ran he called out, in an eager, excited voice:

"The prisoner has escaped! The prisoner has escaped!"

Instantly all was excitement.

The soldiers came running toward Dick from all directions.

They were soon all around him, and many asked him questions, but he pretended to be too excited to answer, and then, while the crowd was running onward to the little building that had been used as a guard-house, Dick worked his way out to one side, and walking calmly over to the edge of the timber, entered it, and moved onward.

"Halt! Who comes there?" called out a sentinel

"I am a comrade," was Dick's reply. "Let me pass. I am looking for the prisoner. He has escaped."

"You don't say so. Well, hurry along, or you won't stand any chance to capture him."

The "Liberty Boy" lost no time in obeying, for he knew that it was a question of only a few moments before the

British would discover their comrade lying unconscious in the room, and would understand the trick that had been played upon them and give chase to him.

"I'll have to run, and fast, too," he told himself.

At that moment wild yells went up on the night air from the encampment.

The redcoats had discovered the trick, and were now starting in pursuit, Dick told himself.

He increased his speed, though there was danger that in doing so he might run against a tree in the dark, and knock himself senseless.

He seemed to be guided by some sort of instinct, however, for he did not run against any obstructions.

The youth, in leaving the encampment, had gone out on the north side, and was now headed nearly north.

As every step he took in this direction would take him farther away from his own encampment, he began so shaping his course so as to go in a half-circle.

He would have to go a long ways in order to get back around onto the other side of the British encampment, but there was no help for it; and Dick was so happy on account of having made his escape that the hard work ahead of him had no terrors for him.

He was ready and willing to endure the fatigue, if by so doing he might make his escape and get safely back to New Brunswick.

He could hear the voices of the British soldiers as they yelled and shouted to one another, and was thus enabled to keep pretty well informed regarding how near the pursuers were.

Had the redcoats maintained silence they would have had the youth puzzled, for he would have been afraid he would run against some of them at any moment.

He was perhaps an hour in making the half-circle, and getting around onto the south side of the British encampment; and then he headed for the point where he had left his horse.

The moon was now up, and it was not nearly so dark as it had been, and as Dick drew near the spot where his horse was tied, he noted that the animal was pawing restlessly at the ground, and pulling at the halter-strap, as if eager to get away from the spot.

This made Dick suspicious.

He well knew that the horse, a magnificent animal, was almost as intelligent as some people, and he decided at once that there was an enemy, possibly more than one, near at hand.

He paused, instantly, and looked around him quickly and searchingly.

As he did so three men leaped out from behind as many trees, and called upon him to surrender.

They held pistols in their hands, and the weapons were leveled.

The "Liberty Boy" was determined, however, that he would not permit himself to be recaptured.

The three men were redcoats, without doubt, but they should not take him back to the British encampment.

The youth was desperate, and would die before surrendering.

With a quick, panther-like leap he was behind a tree, and even as he made the leap he drew two pistols belonging to the soldier he had overcome in his prison.

Crack, crack, crack!

The three redcoats had fired, their shots sounding almost as one.

The bullets did no damage to Dick, however. He had been too quick for the British soldiers.

Leaping out from behind the tree, he fired two shots, one after the other, and down dropped two of the redcoats.

Then the third, whipping out a sword—he was evidently an officer—leaped toward Dick, and hissed out:

"Surrender, or I'll run you through!"

CHAPTER IV.

BACK IN NEW BRUNSWICK.

Quick as a flash Dick hurled one of his pistols straight at the officer.

The light from the moon, sifting down through the trees, was not very good, and so it was probably more by accident than otherwise that Dick's aim was true. Be that as it may, the heavy pistol struck the redcoat fair between the eyes, knocking him down as if he had been struck by a cannon-ball.

He lay still where he fell, too.

The blow had knocked him senseless.

"There! I'm out of that difficulty in safety," thought Dick.

But he knew it would not do to remain in the vicinity.

The pistol-shots had been heard, without doubt, by hundreds of British soldiers, and soon a crowd would be on hand, eager to learn what had been the occasion of the shooting.

"I'll get away from here just as quickly as possible," the youth said to himself, and pausing only long enough to secure his pistol and return it to his belt, he untied his horse, led the animal to the road, leaped into the saddle, and dashed away at the best speed the horse was capable of.

When the British learned the trick that had been played upon them they were very angry.

They had entered the little building, just to take a look, to see if they could discover how the escape had been managed, and there they found their comrade, who was just regaining consciousness.

When he told his story, of how he had entered the building, and had been knocked senseless by a blow from behind, the redcoats were furious, and they dashed away in all directions, eager to catch the daring "Liberty Boy."

General Howe was apprised of the escape of the prisoner, and he was very angry.

He was a good-natured man, as a rule, but like all such, he could become very angry on occasion, and this was one of the occasions. He had fancied that he had the famous "rebel" scout and spy safe, and the escape came as a surprise and shock to him.

In reality the general was indirectly responsible for Dick's escape.

He had sent a British soldier to bring Dick into the farmhouse, where he and his staff had their quarters for the night; and thus had given Dick a chance to do what he had done.

The room in which Dick had been confined was a sort of summer kitchen, which was used in the winter time as a room for the hired man, and he had given up the room to the British for that night at the farmer's request, he being a strong Tory.

General Howe had intended to try to worm some information out of Dick by questioning him, but of course he would have failed in this.

He hoped that his men would recapture the "Liberty Boy," however. Indeed, as he told his officers, he did not see how they could help catching the youth.

"Surely he cannot get away from so many pursuers!" he said.

"Well, I'm not so sure about that," said General Cornwallis, who had great respect for the shrewdness and prowess of the "Liberty Boy." "He is a wonderful fellow, that Dick Slater, and I shall not be at all surprised if the men come back and report that they have failed to recapture the youth."

At last the sound of the five pistol-shots was heard, and General Howe said:

"There. I'm afraid our men have been forced to shoot the young rebel!"

"Yes; or he may have shot some of our men," said General Cornwallis.

"Oh, there is no danger of that, I think; he will be too eager to make his escape to dare stop and make a fight against any of our men."

Half an hour later a party of British soldiers entered the encampment, bearing two wounded soldiers, while two assisted an officer, a captain, to walk, he being faint and dizzy, as the result of a blow on the head with a pistol. This was the officer Dick had thrown the pistol at, and struck between the eyes.

The wounded soldiers were in bad shape.

One was very seriously wounded, and the other would not do any more marching or fighting for a month at least.

The wounded men were taken into a vacant room of the farmhouse, and placed on blankets spread on the floor, and the surgeon dressed their wounds.

General Howe was furious.

The prisoner had not only escaped, but had come near killing two of the British soldiers who had been in pursuit of him.

It was terrible to think of.

General Cornwallis said it was not more than he had expected.

"I tell you, General Cornwallis, that fellow, Dick Slater, young though he is, is a very dangerous youth, and I fear that he is destined to cause us great trouble in the future," said General Howe.

"I agree with you there," was the reply. "Dick Slater certainly will cause us great trouble if he is not captured and shot or hanged."

"Well, you see how it turned out to-night. We had him a prisoner and he escaped."

"Yes; but we didn't know what a slippery fellow he was; next time we will exercise greater care, and see to it that he does not escape."

"Yes, if there should happen to be any 'next time.'"

General Howe was certainly feeling blue.

Talking would do no good, however, and finally he retired for the night, but did not get to sleep very soon. He could not get Dick Slater and the clever manner in which he had made his escape out of his mind.

He rolled and tumbled for two hours at least, and at the end of that time he dropped into an uneasy slumber.

Meanwhile Dick had ridden straight back to New Brunswick.

He was hailed by the sentinel, of course, and on giving his name and the countersign, was permitted to pass on into the town.

He rode at once to his quarters, and after attending to the horse made his way to the house in which General Washington and his staff officers had taken up their quarters for the night.

He was admitted by the orderly, and was conducted at once to the commander-in-chief's private room, orders having been given the orderly to this effect earlier in the evening.

Generals Washington and Greene were in the room, and they greeted Dick pleasantly, and somewhat eagerly.

"Be seated, Dick," said the commander-in-chief, and then he asked:

"Did you find the British encampment, Dick?"

"Yes, your excellency," was the reply.

"Ah, I am glad to hear that! How far away is it?"

"About five miles, I should judge, sir."

"Ah, they are close upon our heels, then!"

"Yes, sir."

"They will be here at an early hour to-morrow, don't you think, General Greene?" asked the commander-in-chief.

"Without doubt, General Washington."

"Well, there is only one thing to do under the circumstances; and that is to continue the retreat."

"That is the best and safest thing to do, I think," agreed General Greene.

"I think we shall eventually be forced to place the Delaware river between us and the enemy," said Washington.

"It begins to look that way."

"Yes, indeed," and then the commander-in-chief asked Dick some more questions about the British, and finally inquired if the youth had had any difficulty in spying upon the enemy.

"Well, I had some difficulty," said Dick, with a smile. "I was captured by the British."

You don't mean it!" exclaimed General Washington.

"You were made a prisoner by the enemy?" from Greene.

"Yes."

"Were you in the encampment?"

"I was."

"And did you see General Howe?"

"Yes, sir; and talked to him—or, rather, he talked to me, and told me what my fate would be in the morning."

"Well, well!" from General Washington. "And how did you manage to escape?"

"They tied my arms," said Dick, "but did not do it very well, and they placed me in a little building of one room, a short distance from a farmhouse, where the encampment was, and I managed to get my arms free after awhile, and after I had been in there an hour or so a British soldier came and opened the door and entered. I knocked him senseless, donned his coat—as you see"—indicating the scarlet coat which he still wore—"and then left the room and ran along, crying out that the prisoner had escaped. In the excitement which this occasioned I slipped out of the encampment and made my escape."

"Well, you did work it cleverly, sure enough, Dick!" said General Washington.

"He certainly did!" coincided Greene.

Then Dick told how he had been confronted by the three redcoats, and had got the better of them, shooting down two of them, and knocking the third senseless with the pistol.

The two generals complimented Dick on his good work, and he received their compliments and praise with becoming modesty.

After asking Dick some more questions, the commander-in-chief told him he might go to his quarters and get some rest and sleep, and saluting and bidding them good-night, he took his departure.

When Dick was gone the two generals held a long conversation, and discussed the situation in all its phases.

It was decided that they would continue their retreat in the morning, and that as a good means of delaying the British they would have the bridge across the Raritan broken down.

"That will cause the enemy considerable trouble and delay," said Greene, "and we need not hurry so much as would be the case otherwise."

"True," agreed General Washington. "That will be a good stroke, and we will do it."

The patriot army was up and stirring early next morning.

A force of soldiers was sent to the bridge with axes and

crowbars, and they chopped the stringers of the bridge in two, and then pried the end around with the crowbars, until the structure gave way, and tumbled down into the stream.

It hung there awhile, and then broke away entirely, and went floating down the stream, and the soldiers uttered a cheer.

"Now the redcoats will have to swim across, or wait till they can build another bridge," said Dick Slater, who was one of the party that had destroyed the bridge.

Then they went back into the encampment and ate their breakfasts.

An hour later the entire patriot army was ready to march.

Just as the order was given to start a lookout who had occupied a position on the top of a house called out that the British army was coming.

CHAPTER V.

RETREATING.

This news did not disconcert the patriots greatly, however, for they knew the enemy would be delayed by the river, which it would be impossible for them to cross until after they had built a bridge of some kind.

So the patriot army marched onward at a slow and steady pace, knowing that there was no need of hurrying.

When the advance guard of the British reached the Raritan river and found the bridge gone they paused, and waited till the main army came up.

General Howe and his staff held a council.

What was the best thing to do?

This was the question they asked one another.

At last it was decided to build a bridge, and the men went to work with their axes with a will, and cut and trimmed, and hewed at a great rate, there being plenty of timber near by.

Many hands make light labor, it is said, and in this case the truth of the saying was proved.

Although it was a big task, yet with so many men at work the bridge, a rude affair, but sufficient for the purpose, was finished that same day, and the army crossed and took up its position in New Brunswick.

The people of the town were somewhat excited.

Only the night before the patriot army had been encamped in their town, and now on this night the British army was there.

War was certainly right at their very doors.

Still, so long as there was no actual fighting between the opposing armies it would not be so bad.

The worst feature was the loss of considerable in the way of provisions which the citizens had to put up with, the soldiers helping themselves without much ceremony.

In this respect the British were worse than the patriot

soldiers had been, needy though the latter were. The red-coats looked upon all Americans as legitimate prey, and had not much sympathy for them, while the patriots, being Americans, and knowing the labor it took to produce food-stuff and provisions of all kinds, could not find it in their hearts to help themselves in quite a free-handed fashion.

The preceding evening the patriots of New Brunswick had had the best of the affair, the patriot army having been there, and the Tories had been glum-faced and silent; but to-night the situation was reversed—the British army was there, and the patriots were silent, while the Tories were correspondingly jubilant and elated.

Some of the young men among the patriots organized a little force of ten or a dozen, and suddenly sallied out and made an attack on the Tories.

They had no weapons—in fact, neither did the Tories—other than clubs, so no one was killed, but by the time the affair was ended six or seven of the Tories had broken heads, and were carried to their homes by their comrades, who went breathing threats at every step.

The youthful patriots who had put the Tories to flight were not alarmed, however; at any rate, they merely laughed derisively in response to the others' threats.

The British soldiers who witnessed the affair had taken no part in the combat. They enjoyed the affair too much as spectators to wish to mix in.

Of course, their sympathies were with the Tories, but that did not prevent them from complimenting the youths who had given the others such a thrashing.

"I'll tell you, boys," said one British soldier who seemed to be a good-natured fellow, "if you want to save your skins, you had better slip away for to-night."

"Why so?" asked one of the patriot youths.

"Because some of those young fellows yonder will likely go to our commander and make complaint against you, stating that you are rebels, and he will doubtless order your arrest. Do you understand?"

"Yes, and thank you for your kindness in giving us warning."

"That is all right."

The patriot youths immediately separated and slipped out of town, on the west side, where there were only one or two sentinels, and were soon together again in the timber, a mile or so from the town.

Some of the Tory youths did go to General Howe with the story of how they had been attacked by some "rebel" youths right in New Brunswick, and the British general ordered the arrest of the "rebels."

When the soldiers went with the Tory youths to the houses where the patriots lived, however, not one was to be found, though the houses were searched from top to bottom.

"They have sneaked out and got away," said one of the Tories, in a disappointed voice, when they had made the rounds and found only disappointment on every hand.

The patriot boys remained hidden in the timber till the British army took its departure next morning, and then

they returned to their home, and gave their Tory enemies the laugh.

There were several individual combats that day between Tory and patriot boys, and the patriots held up their end in very good shape, indeed, and when evening came a number of the Tories had black eyes.

Meanwhile the patriot army had marched steadily onward during the preceding day, and reached Princeton an hour before sundown.

Here they went into camp, for the patriots were confident the British army would be unable to get across the river and do any marching that day.

There was another reason why General Washington was willing to stop and go into camp at Princeton. There was trouble among the soldiers.

The terms for which many had enlisted had expired on the last day of November, and those whose terms were ended wished to return to their homes.

There had been such a long run of bad luck since the battle of Long Island that the soldiers were greatly disheartened.

They had had so much trouble that they felt gloomy; they could see nothing ahead but ultimate disaster, and many openly said that there was no use of trying to fight again the British, that England was too powerful, and would crush them in the end.

During the march several hundred of the soldiers whose terms had expired the day before had dropped out, saying they were going home.

Many more had threatened to do the same, and General Washington was sorely troubled. He feared his little army would dwindle down to such small proportions as to make it lose all semblance of an army, and he intended to make a personal appeal to the soldiers and try to persuade them to stay.

And after supper was over he did appeal to them. He spoke in earnest, feeling tones, and presented the matter in such a light that many re-enlisted on the spot, and only about one hundred held out and said they were going to quit and go home.

When he saw that they were determined, the commander-in-chief thanked them for what they had done, and wished them well, and hoped they might reach their homes safely. He was a noble-minded, generous-hearted man, and possessed that quality so rarely found, of being able to remember and be grateful for past good work, even when there was nothing more to be expected from the men in question. He told the soldiers who were going home that he hoped that after they had rested, they would return, and would bring their neighbors and friends with them.

Then he went to his quarters, followed by the cheers of the soldiers.

They loved their commander-in-chief. He was simple and unaffected in his manner toward them, and was so just and generous in every way that they could not help loving him. The one hundred soldiers who said they were going home felt somewhat ashamed of themselves for think-

ing of deserting the noble man at this time when he needed them most.

They quieted their consciences, however, by saying to themselves that they would do as he asked, come back, and bring a lot of neighbors and friends with them.

In the house occupied as headquarters, General Washington and the members of his staff gathered in the commander-in-chief's room and held a council.

They figured carefully, and it was decided that when the hundred soldiers took their leave there would be about three thousand left.

It was a little army, but it was sufficient for the purpose, which was to serve as a nucleus for a large army, which it was the commander-in-chief's purpose to get together that winter, if possible.

It was further decided to continue onward on the morrow, and cross the Delaware River. With this broad stream between them and the enemy it was thought that they would be safe for a time at least.

Next morning the army broke camp and marched toward the west, and that evening it reached the great river.

The patriot commander-in-chief saw it was going to be a long and difficult task to get the army, the stores, cannon, and all across the river, so he sent two thousand of his men back, with instructions to hold the British in check until the work of gathering a fleet of boats was completed, and all was in readiness for making the trip across the river.

This took several days, and there were a number of engagements between the British and the patriots, but the latter employed such tactics as were effective in holding the enemy. They concealed themselves in the edge of the timber, fired upon the redcoats as they came along, and their progress was very slow indeed.

The patriot force thus held the British back for five days, and on the evening of the fifth day Dick Slater came to them with the information that the flotilla of boats had been gathered, the guns, stores, etc., had been taken over the river, and that all was in readiness for the army to cross.

This was good news to the tired patriot soldiers, and soon after dark that night they stole away, and reached the encampment on the bank of the Delaware early in the morning.

As soon as it was light enough the work of crossing the stream was begun.

It was slow and tiresome work, but by the middle of the afternoon the entire army was on the other side, and safe, for the time being, at least.

The British arrived on the bank of the river that evening, within two hours of the time the patriot army had crossed, and here they went into camp.

They could not imagine how they were going to follow, for there was not a boat to be found on their side of the river, and that night the British officers held a council.

General Cornwallis was eager to make an effort to collect a flotilla of boats and make an attack on the patriots, but

General Howe said there was no need of going to that trouble.

"It would be practically impossible to find boats enough for our needs," he said. "We would have to have sufficient number to enable us to cross with a large force—at least half our army—or we would be exterminated; so you see it is out of the question. The best thing we can do, to my way of thinking, is to go into camp, and wait till the river freezes over; then we can go over on the ice and strike the rebels the finishing blow."

After some discussion this plan was agreed upon, the British army went into camp for the night, and next day a more permanent and satisfactory arrangement of the troops was made, the line extending from where they had been encamped that night, down to Burlington, several miles below Trenton.

The British center was at Trenton, and leaving Colonel Rahl, a Hessian, in command, the troops in Trenton being for the most part Hessians, Generals Howe and Cornwallis took leave of the army and went back to New York to wait for the Delaware River to freeze over. In New York they could find more comfort and enjoyment than in Trenton, and comforts seemed to be what the majority of the British officers were looking for in those days.

CHAPTER VI.

ON A DANGEROUS ERRAND.

Naturally General Washington wished to know what the British intended doing.

He did not know, of course, that the two British generals had gone back to New York, and that they had decided to wait till the river froze over to cross and make an attack.

He thought it likely that the British commanders were scheming to get across the stream then and make an attack on his little army. And he wished to have knowledge of their intentions ahead of time, if possible.

To that end he sent for Dick Slater.

"Dick," he said, as soon as the "Liberty Boy" put in an appearance, "I have some work for you to do."

"I am glad of it, sir," was the prompt reply.

"You are ready to do any work that is assigned to you, eh, my boy?" with a smile.

"I am ready to attempt it, at least, sir," was the modest reply.

"Well, the job which I have in mind is dangerous and difficult. It is that you cross the river and go into the British encampment on a spying expedition."

"I am ready to start whenever you wish me to do so, sir."

"Very well. I wish to secure information regarding the intentions of the British, if possible, Dick, and that will be your task. Enter the British encampment, if it is possible to do so, find out all you can, and when you have se-

cured what you consider to be sufficient information for my needs, come back."

"Very well, sir; I will start this evening."

"Good! And be very careful, my boy, and don't let them capture you, for you might not be so lucky as to escape next time."

"I will be careful, your excellency, both for my own sake and for the sake of the cause."

"That is the way to look at it, Dick. A good deal may depend on your doing the work successfully, and let this knowledge assist in helping you to be cautious."

"I will do so, sir."

After a long talk, in which the commander-in-chief told Dick just what he wished done, Dick left headquarters and went to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys," and began making his preparations for the trip.

Of course his comrades were eager to know where he was going, and he told them.

Bob Estabrook wanted to go along, but Dick said that he thought it would be best for him to go alone, as he would have to be very careful, and two could not be quite so careful as one could alone.

That afternoon it snowed very hard for hours.

It was still snowing when, just as it was growing dark, Dick took his departure, and made his way through the timber, in the direction of the river.

It was about two miles and a half to the river, and this was a walk of an hour, for the snow was now more than a foot deep, and this made the walking difficult.

When Dick arrived at the river he went to the point where the men were stationed who were guarding the boats, and told them he was going on a spying expedition, and wanted the use of the smallest boat they had.

One of the soldiers showed him where to find the boat he wanted, and then Dick got in and started down the stream.

It was Dick's intention to row till he was opposite Trenton, and then cross and make a landing somewhere along the water front of the town.

It was about three miles down to Trenton, and as the "Liberty Boy" was in no hurry, he did scarcely more than let the boat drift with the current.

Fortunately for his purpose, the night was quite dark. There were neither moon nor stars, and on the water, where the snow melted as fast as it fell, all was darkness; on shore, however, there was a white mantle over all. It was light enough so that objects could be discerned with tolerable distinctness quite a ways.

When he was opposite the north end of the town of Trenton, Dick headed slantingly across the river, and began pulling at the oars.

He crossed the river, and found himself about the middle of the town's water-front.

Here he stopped the boat by backing water, and held it motionless within fifty yards of the shore for several minutes, while he took careful observations.

There were occasional street lamps to be seen in the

town, and the snow made it light enough so that objects could be seen on the shore, and after awhile the "Liberty Boy" succeeded in locating the sentinels who were nearest the spot where he was at that time.

A few minutes later he had succeeded in locating the point where the sentinels' posts came together, and he held the boat motionless, opposite this point, until they met there, and had turned and started back; then he pulled slowly and cautiously in, and made a landing.

There was an old, rickety wharf at this point, and the youth pulled his boat under it and tied it there. Then he stole up to the street fronting the river and walked eastward at a good pace.

He expected to hear a challenge from the sentinels at any moment, but he did not want to run, for that would make them certain that he was a rebel, and there would be a great hue and cry at once. So he walked, but had gone only halfway across the street when he heard the sharp voice of one of the sentinels in a challenge:

"Halt! Who goes there?"

Now, Dick did not want to be catechized by the sentinel. He was dressed in rough clothing, such as was worn by poor boys, and considered that he was pretty thoroughly disguised, but he did not wish to run the risk of being recognized. So when he heard the challenge, instead of stopping, he dashed forward on a run, and headed for the nearest street which led eastward.

"Halt, or I will fire!" roared the sentinel.

The youth did not stop. Indeed, he ran faster than before.

"Back!"

The sentinel had kept his word.

He had fired, and that he had meant to bring the fugitive down Dick did not doubt, for he heard the bullet whistle within an inch of his left ear.

On he dashed, hopeful now that he would succeed in getting away.

He glanced back, and saw that he was being pursued, however; and it was soon evident that the redcoat was a good runner, for he was holding his own with Dick, although the "Liberty Boy" was a wonderfully good sprinter.

The first corner Dick came to he turned, and as he did so he ran into the arms of a party of eight or ten British soldiers.

He bumped against one very hard, and the fellow went down, with a howl of pain; but he grabbed hold of Dick as he went, and pulled the youth down with him.

He held on tightly, too, and began trying to kick the boy who had bumped him in such a severe and unceremonious manner.

The "Liberty Boy," realizing his danger, struggled fiercely to escape and resume his flight, but the redcoat hung on tightly, and would not let him go.

"Bump into a British soldier, will you?" cried the redcoat, kicking lustily. "I'll teach you, you young rascal. Take that—and that—and that!" Each time he said "that," the redcoat kicked at Dick, but as the youth was

on top of him, pinning him down, he could not do much damage. It no doubt relieved his feelings somewhat to think he was kicking the author of his trouble, but that was all it did do.

Realizing that he was not doing much injury, the British soldier called to his comrades to kick the youth.

"I'll hold him while you fellows kick him," he said. "I'll wager that by the time we get through with him he will know better than to come running around a corner and bump one of the king's soldiers in such fashion. Kick him, fellows; kick him good and hard!"

The other redcoats were just on the point of obeying their comrade's orders when the sentinell came running around the corner.

He paused, and stared at the party in amazement. Then an exclamation of delight escaped his lips as he saw the British soldier holding the youth.

"Good!" he cried. "You have the rebel there! Hold onto him. Don't let him get away!"

"He is a rebel, you say?" asked one of the others.

"Yes. At least, I believe so."

Then he told how he had seen the young fellow walking up from the river front, and had called on him to stop; how the boy had broke into a run, and how he had fired at the fugitive and then given chase.

"I am confident he is a spy!" he said in conclusion. "Don't let him get away, whatever you do."

Two of the redcoats seized Dick, and jerked him to his feet, the soldier who had hold of him letting go in order to permit his comrades to lift the youth up, and all closed in around him.

The British soldier who had been knocked down scrambled to his feet, and joined his comrades in the circle about the prisoner.

It happened that the encounter had taken place near a lamp-post, and there was light enough so they could see very well.

"Well, we have you tight and fast, my rebel friend!" said one of the British soldiers. "What have you to say for yourself?"

CHAPTER VII.

CAPTURED AGAIN.

The "Liberty Boy" was keenly alive to the situation.

He realized that he was in trouble, and likely serious trouble at that.

He had been having rather a bad run of luck for awhile, but he was determined to fight it out to the bitter end. He would not give up, but would make an attempt to deceive his captors.

To try to make his escape by entering into a struggle with the redcoats would be foolish; he could not possibly hope to break loose from a dozen able-bodied men; in so far

as that part of it was concerned he would have to accept the situation.

He thought it possible that he might deceive the British soldiers into thinking he was harmless, and not a spy, however, and he decided to try this. So when the man said, "What have you to say for yourself?" he replied:

"All I hev ter say, mister, is thet I dunno w'y ye hev done this heer."

"Oh, you don't know, eh?" said the sentinel sneeringly.

"Thet's whut I say, mister, an' et's ther trooth, too."

"Bah! Why didn't you stop when I ordered you to halt, a little while ago, back yonder by the river front?"

"I wuz skeered ter stop, mister."

"You were afraid to stop, you say?"

"Yas, mister."

"Why were you afraid?"

"I didn' know who ye wuz, nur whut ye wanted with me, an' I wuz erfraid ye wuz goin' ter hurt me."

"Bosh! We don't believe a word of that story."

"Et's so, ennyhow."

"Not a word of it is true; you refused to stop because you were afraid to, of course; and you were afraid because you are a rebel."

"No, yer wrong, mister," protested Dick, acting the part of a green, illiterate youth to perfection. "I hain't no rebel, I hain't."

"Of course he would deny it," growled the man who had been upset by Dick.

"Humph!" from the one who was doing the questioning.

"If you are not a spy, who and what are you?"

"I'm Jim Bundy."

"Where do you live?"

"Erbout two miles up ther river, an' back erways in ther timber."

"On which side of the river?"

"This side."

"When did you come to town?"

"Jest er leetle w'ile ergo."

"How did you come?"

"In er boat."

"Where did you get the boat?"

"I allers hev et; I keep et in er crick whut runs inter ther river not fur frum our place."

"You swear you are not a rebel spy?"

"Uv course I hain't, mister. W'y, my dad's er loyal king's man, he is, an' so'm I."

"Humph! Well, I guess that the proper thing will be to take you to headquarters, and see what they think of you there."

"Yes, that is the best thing to do," agreed another, and the rest said the same.

The "Liberty Boy's" heart sank.

If they took him to headquarters Generals Howe and Cornwallis would recognize him, he knew.

Then all would be up with him.

He had been their prisoner not so very long ago, and

had escaped, but they would see to it that he did not escape a second time.

He was tempted to try to break away from his captors, but on second thought decided not to do so. He could not hope to succeed, and his action would stamp him as being a rebel. And feeling thus, the redcoats would not hesitate to kill him.

No, he must wait, and trust to good luck to be enabled to escape later on.

So, when the redcoats told him to march along, he did so without any hesitancy.

"Ye'll fin' ye air mistook erbout me, misters," he said with assumed confidence, "an' then ye'll hev ter turn me loose erg'in."

"We'll turn you loose if Colonel Rahl says so," was the reply.

Colonel Rahl!

The "Liberty Boy" was surprised.

Why had the soldier said "Colonel Rahl," instead of "General Howe," or "General Cornwallis?"

Could it be possible that neither of the two generals was in Trenton?

The youth hoped so, for he had never met Colonel Rahl, and did not believe that officer had ever seen him.

"I am sure he was not with the British army the night I was captured, up beyond New Brunswick," he said to himself. With a view to learning something, if possible, Dick asked:

"Who is Kernel Rall, er whutever ye calls 'im?"

"He is the commanding officer here," was the reply.

"But I thort I heerd my dad say ez how thet Gin'ral Who, er sumthin' like thet, wuz ther commander uv ther British army."

"You mean General Howe."

"Oh, mebbly thet wuz et. I knowed et wuz sumthin' like thet."

The redcoats laughed.

In spite of themselves, they began to believe the youth was what he claimed to be, simply a countryman. He played his part so cleverly that he would have deceived almost anyone.

"General Howe is the commander-in-chief of the British army," explained one of the soldiers. "But he is away now."

"Thet's too bad; I hoped thet ye would take me afore 'im, fur I'm shore he'd let me go right erway."

"Perhaps so; but you won't be taken before him, for he is a hundred miles from here. Colonel Rahl is the one in command, the generals both being away."

The soldier, having been led to believe that Dick was really an unsophisticated country youth by his superb acting, had become careless, and was giving out information.

So Generals Howe and Cornwallis were gone!

This was welcome news to Dick.

It was information of importance, as well, and he thought of how delighted General Washington would be when he learned of it.

The "Liberty Boy" felt that the absence of the two generals might be the means of saving his life; and he was thankful they were gone on this account.

His only fear was that there might be some of the common soldiers who would see and recognize him.

He hoped that such would not be the case, however.

One thing that made him think that possibly he would not be recognized was the fact that the men under Colonel Rahl, in Trenton, would be, he was sure, in the main Hessians, and they had joined the British army coming from New York, since the night Dick was captured, and would not know him.

At any rate the outlook was not quite so dark and gloomy.

On the redcoats marched, with the prisoner in their midst, and they gave Dick no chance to make a break for liberty.

At last they came to a stop in front of a building on one of the main streets.

They were soon knocking at the door, and when an orderly opened it they told him they had a prisoner, and wished to have Colonel Rahl see him and decide what should be done with him.

The orderly told them to wait a few moments, and then he hastened away.

He was gone only a short time when he returned and said that Colonel Rahl would see them.

They entered the house, and were soon in the private room of the colonel.

The officer was a Hessian, but spoke English, and he eyed Dick for some moments in silence. Dick bore the scrutiny well, and managed to maintain the look of simplicity that might be expected to rest on the face of a green country youth of that period.

"Who are you?" the officer asked abruptly.

"I'm Jim Bundy," was Dick's reply.

"Jim Bundy, eh?"

"Yes."

"Where do you live?"

"Bout two miles up ther river."

"What are you, rebel or loyalist?"

"My dad's er king's man, mister, an' I'm ther same thet my dad is."

The colonel eyed the youth searchingly. He was a pretty shrewd fellow, but the acting of the "Liberty Boy" was so perfect that he was deceived, and he turned to his men, and said:

"Where did you find him?"

They explained.

The officer listened intently to the explanation, and when he had heard all he turned again and looked at the youth.

He studied Dick's face keenly and searchingly.

Then he seemed to ponder awhile.

At last he said:

"Take him to the guard-house, and lock him up for to-night; to-morrow we will investigate, and if his story

proves to be true then we will release him; but if it proves to be false, then we will know he is a spy, and then—we will treat him as a spy should be treated."

The last words were spoken in an extremely threatening and significant manner.

"But, mister, ther folks'll be oneasy erbout me ef I don' git back hum afore mornin'," said Dick.

"I can't help that," curtly. "Take him away, men."

"But I'm er loyal king's man, an'——"

"Take him away, men. I will investigate your story in the morning, young man, and if it proves to be true then you will be set free. It won't hurt you to spend a night in the guard-house. Better men than you have done so before now."

"Yas, but ther folks'll be oneasy erbout me," protested Dick as the soldiers led him away; but the door was closed between Dick and the officer, and there was no response from Colonel Rahl.

The soldiers led Dick to a building a couple of blocks distant, and conducted him into a room on the second floor.

"Say," said Dick, as the soldiers were turning to leave the room, "d'ye think thet Kernal Rall'll let me jine ther army ter-morrer?"

"Do you wish to join?" asked one.

"Yas; I wanter go over ercross the river an' he'p lick ther rebels. Yer goin' ter go ercross an' lick 'em right erway, hain't ye?"

"Just as soon as the river freezes over we're going across," was the reply. "And about your joining the army, I judge that you will be permitted to do so if you really wish it."

"All right; I'll ax 'im in ther mornin'."

The soldiers then went out, and locked the door behind them.

"So," thought Dick, "the British are not going to try to cross the river until after it has frozen over, and Generals Howe and Cornwallis have gone to New York. Good! I have learned sufficient, and if I can make my escape, and get back to the patriot encampment, I will be all right."

But could he escape?

That was the question, and it was a difficult one to answer.

He realized that it would be a hard matter to make his escape.

However, Dick Slater was not the youth to give up, and he was determined to make an attempt at escaping before the night was ended.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ESCAPE.

It was dark in the room, the British soldiers having taken the candle when they went.

The "Liberty Boy" had made good use of his eyes while there was a light, however.

He noted that there was only one window, and that there were iron bars on the outside.

This seemed to settle the question of his making his escape through the window.

The door was a very strong one, too, with a huge lock.

The truth of the matter was that this building was the town jail, and was constructed with a view to holding law-breakers, though it is doubtful whether the builders looked forward to its holding military prisoners.

The youth felt his way over to the cot at one side of the room, and sat down to ponder the situation.

He had secured all the information needful, and if he could make his escape all would be well.

But making his escape was, where the difficulty would come in.

Presently he got up and walked over to the window.

He did not have much difficulty in opening it.

But when he had done so he seemed to be no nearer freedom than before, for there were the iron bars.

It was snowing and very dark outside.

Taking hold of the bars, one after another, Dick tested them.

He pushed against them with all his strength, and tested them thoroughly.

They were solid as the rock in which their ends were imbedded, however, with one exception.

The youth found that he could shake one of the bars around a bit.

It was loose in its socket at the bottom of the window-sill.

The bars were about six inches apart, so if he could get one loose it would be possible for him to squeeze through.

The thought that he might succeed in doing this was inspiring.

The "Liberty Boy" at once went to work.

He pushed and jerked at the iron-bar at a great rate.

He exerted all his strength, and after a time he thought he had loosened it somewhat.

"If I keep on I may get it out of the way," thought Dick. "I'll keep working, at any rate."

Occasionally he paused and listened, for he feared someone might come and catch him at the work.

No one was heard, however, and he continued his work practically without interruption.

At last he got up on the window-sill with his feet, and seizing two of the solid rods, he placed his feet against the loose one, and pushed outward with all his force.

Slowly but surely the bar bent.

It was strong, but the force being exerted against it was too great, and the bar gradually yielded, and was forced out of its socket.

The "Liberty Boy's" heart swelled with a feeling of delight.

"I believe I shall succeed in getting out of here, after

all," he said to himself. "I think I shall get out of the prison before morning, I'm sure."

He continued his work, and at last had the iron bar bent outward at an angle of forty-five degrees.

Then Dick felt of the opening thus made.

He decided that it was large enough to permit the passage of his body.

Then he wondered how far it was to the ground, as the gloom and falling snow prevented him seeing a yard away.

He had counted the steps as he came upstairs, and after doing some mental figuring he decided that it was sixteen to eighteen feet to the ground from the window-sill.

This would mean a distance of about twelve feet from his heels to the ground.

It would be quite a drop, but Dick had dropped farther than that many a time, and did not fear, so far as the fall to the ground was concerned. What he was afraid of was that there might be a fence right below the window, and that the pickets might be sharpened.

In that case, if he should drop upon one of them, it would impale him, and he would die a horrible death.

The thought of this caused a shudder to shake his form.

He stuck his head out of the window and peered down.

The cell he was in was at the rear of the jail, and all was dark outside.

The snow made it possible to see faintly, but it was impossible to distinguish anything with any certainty.

He could not decide whether or not there was a fence below.

Dick was a brave youth, however, and not to be deterred by anything that might be in his way to put an end to his life.

He did not know that there was a fence below, and he made up his mind to proceed just as if he knew there was no fence there.

He could not stop to consider what might be. He would make the drop, and take the chances.

It would require great courage and nerve to drop in this manner, but, Dick was possessed of ample courage and nerve.

Had this not been the case he would never have succeeded in becoming such a successful spy.

Having made all the examination possible, and having come to a decision as to his course, Dick did not hesitate.

He listened a few moments, to assure himself that no one was coming, and then he worked his way through the opening between the bars, feet foremost.

It was a tight squeeze, but by turning his body sidewise he managed to get through, and then, grasping two of the bars with his hands, he lowered himself down till he hung at arm's length.

The youth judged that his feet must be within ten or a dozen feet of the ground, and he had no fears of being hurt if he simply struck the earth.

There was only one way to find out regarding a fence, however, and that was by dropping and making a practical test, and this is what Dick had to do.

He hung there a few moments, and then, setting his teeth firmly, he let go his hold.

He was scarcely more than a second in reaching the ground, but it seemed longer to Dick.

He had more than half expected to feel the sharp point of a picket entering his body, and his nerves were wrought up, but to his delight nothing of the kind happened.

He struck nothing till he reached the solid ground. The impact was sufficient to jar him considerable, but he was not at all injured, and was on his feet the next moment.

He stood perfectly still, and listened.

Hearing nothing, he began moving slowly and cautiously away from the spot.

He had not gone ten paces before he heard a sound which seemed to come from the room he had just left.

Then he saw a light shining out through the open window.

The noise had been made by the door opening.

"Jove, my escape will be discovered!" thought Dick. "I won't have any time to spare in getting away from here."

At this instant a face appeared at the window, and a voice was heard calling out:

"The prisoner has escaped! The prisoner has escaped! On guard, sentinels. Don't let him escape."

The "Liberty Boy" realized that he must get away from there in a hurry, and he hastened as rapidly as possible, and at the same time kept himself well back in the darkness.

The youth had not gone far before he heard the sound of footsteps.

Someone was coming.

Then he heard footsteps in another direction, and then in still another.

"Jove, the redcoats are coming this way from all directions!" he said to himself, and he began looking around for some place of temporary concealment.

The man at the window of the room Dick had escaped from kept on yelling for the sentinels to keep a sharp lookout for the escaped prisoner, and he made so much noise that people who lived in the vicinity were aroused.

Many doors and windows were thrown open, and the citizens peered out, to see what was going on.

Suddenly Dick heard the trampling of many feet, and knew that a party of soldiers was coming up the street toward him, and close at hand, too.

He did not dare go back toward the prison. To go across the street would do no good.

He paused irresolutely in front of a house, just as the front door opened.

Back in the hallway was a light, and outlined against this light was a girl of perhaps seventeen years.

In an instant Dick made up his mind.

He leaped up the steps, and appeared in front of the girl as if by magic.

She uttered a startled cry and shrank back, but Dick said quickly:

"Sh! Do not be alarmed, miss; I will not hurt you. I wish to ask a favor. May I go through your house and out at the rear door?"

"Are you the escaped prisoner?" the girl asked.

Something in her tones made Dick believe that she was a patriot, and he answered unhesitatingly:

"I am, miss."

"Then enter," was the eager reply. "Quick, before you are seen!"

She stepped aside, and Dick bounded through the doorway.

The girl closed the door quickly, and bolted it.

"Come," she said in a low, cautious voice; "follow me."

The youth obeyed, and they traversed the hall, and when the back door was reached the girl unbolted and opened it.

The "Liberty Boy" looked out, and saw that all was quiet in the rear of the house. The excitement was all around on the main street, in front.

"Miss, you have perhaps saved me from being recaptured," said Dick, in an earnest voice, "and I thank you sincerely."

"You are more than welcome," was the reply, "for I am a patriot girl."

"If you will be so kind, miss, I would be pleased to know the name of the girl who was so good to me," said Dick.

"My name is Martha Rudford, sir. And yours?"

"My name is Dick Slater."

"Aha, so you are Dick Slater, eh?" cried a triumphant voice. "Well, you are my prisoner, Dick Slater! Up with your hands!"

CHAPTER IX.

COLONEL RAHL'S CHAGRIN.

The "Liberty Boy" and the girl whirled instantly, and saw a man standing near, with a leveled pistol in his hand. He had evidently stepped out of a room, the door of which was at his side, for the door was partially open now, and it had not been open when they passed it a few moments before.

"Uncle!" exclaimed the girl, in horrified accents.

"Yes, your uncle, girl," said the man sternly. "And now, what I would like to know is, what do you mean by assisting a rebel spy to escape?"

Dick understood it all, he was sure. The girl was a patriot, while her uncle was as undoubtedly a Tory. That the man would capture him, and turn him over to the British was certain, unless he was prevented from doing so, and Dick hardly knew how it would be possible to prevent him. The Tory was armed, while Dick had no weapons at all, his pistols having been taken away from him when he was placed in the cell in the prison.

The girl was as brave and spirited as she was beautiful, for although she was pale, she did not quail or falter before the wrath of her uncle.

"I am a patriot, uncle, as you know," she said bravely, "and I was doing what I considered to be right in assisting this young man to escape."

"Of course you would wish to help him escape, because he is a young fellow, and handsome," said the man, with a sneer.

"That was not my reason, uncle," was the dignified reply, but the girl's face colored up, and she looked somewhat confused, for she feared that Dick might think her uncle's words true.

"Oh, of course you would say it was not the reason," was the reply, in a skeptical voice. "But no matter. He won't escape, after all. I happened to be on hand to spoil the scheme. Dick Slater, place your hands behind your back, and turn your back toward me!"

The "Liberty Boy" had been doing some rapid thinking.

He did not intend to permit himself to be recaptured if he could possibly help it. Yet he did not wish to injure the uncle of the girl who had befriended him. He judged, however, that he would not be thought hard of by the girl if he simply got the better of the man in a struggle, without doing him permanent injury.

As he would not have used weapons if he had possessed them, Dick was not worried by their absence; and he felt that he would be able to get the better of the man, for he was used to hand-to-hand combats, while the girl's uncle probably had never been engaged in one.

So in order to throw the man off his guard, Dick placed his hands behind his back, and turned his back toward the Tory, as ordered.

"Now, Martha, you may make yourself useful," her uncle said. "Step into the kitchen and get the clothes-line which you will find hanging on the wall."

She started to obey, but was halted by another command, to first close the door.

The girl did this unwillingly, as Dick could see, and he said to her in a low voice:

"Never mind, Miss Martha. Do as he says, and don't worry about me."

"Keep your mouth shut!" ordered the Tory. And then to his niece he added:

"Hurry, now, and get the clothes-line."

The girl opened a door at the side of the hall, and passed through into a room, which was evidently the kitchen.

The instant the girl was out of harm's way Dick acted.

Whirling, he threw himself head first and headlong straight at the Tory.

The action took the man wholly by surprise.

He did not even have the pistol cocked, so was unable to fire.

The result was that Dick struck him in the pit of the

stomach with his shoulder, and knocked him to the floor with a crash, where he lay gasping for breath.

He dropped the pistol as he fell, and Dick grabbed it, and placed it in his pocket.

The girl came running out of the kitchen, crying::

"What is it?"

She saw what had happened, and Dick was sure there was a look of pleasure in her eyes.

"Oh, go—go quickly!" she cried. "Make your escape while you have the opportunity."

"I will do so, miss," said Dick. "And now, good-by; but rest assured that I shall not soon forget what I owe you."

"You owe me nothing, sir; good-by."

She opened the door, and almost pushed Dick out of the house, and then she closed the door, and Dick heard the bolt shoot into place.

"She is going to try to keep her uncle from giving chase to me," thought Dick. "There is a brave girl for you. I judge that she has saved me from being captured, at any rate."

He hastened away, for he feared that British soldiers might soon put in an appearance on the back street.

He went as rapidly as he dared, for he was eager to get out of the town.

He headed toward the river, but was forced to go in a zigzag manner in order to escape meeting redcoats.

The alarm had become general, and searching parties were numerous.

The "Liberty Boy" was on his guard, however, and managed to avoid being seen by members of any of the crowds until he was at the end of the street which reached the river at the point nearest where his boat was concealed.

Here Dick paused, and took an observation.

It had ceased snowing, and grown lighter, but the ground was covered with the white mantle, and this made it now possible for him to see plainly.

In the distance, at the river's edge, Dick made out the forms of two sentinels, and presently the forms began moving, and he was sure he was right.

The sentinel nearest him passed along in front of the youth, and on up the river perhaps fifty yards, and then turned and paced slowly back till he met the other sentinel once more at the end of the post.

Here they again came to a stop, and Dick decided that it was time for him to make the attempt to reach his boat, which he had left underneath the old wharf.

He did not hesitate.

He knew that promptness of action was one of the main essentials in the make-up of a good scout and spy, and leaving the shelter of a house, he darted toward the river.

He had traversed nearly the whole distance before he was seen, and then a loud yell was heard from one of the soldiers;

"There he is! There's the spy!"

Such were the words of the sentinel, and then crack! crack! went two muskets.

Both sentinels had fired.

One bullet went wide of the mark, but the other wounded Dick on the left arm slightly.

The "Liberty Boy" did not stop, however. Instead, he increased his speed, if anything.

He was determined to reach the boat, and make his escape, if possible.

But even as he made the dash down the slope to the wharf, he was saying to himself:

"What if the boat isn't there!"

He thought it possible that the sentinels had made search for a boat, after having seen him coming away from the river when he first came to Trenton, earlier in the evening.

And, indeed, such had been the case; but, as will be remembered, the sentinel who had given chase to Dick had seen him captured, and had known that the youth was taken to headquarters, and feeling that there was no danger that the youth would be back for his boat that night, it had been decided to let the boat alone; so when Dick dived in, under the wharf, he found his boat right where he left it.

"Thank goodness for that!" he thought, and then he leaped into the boat, untied the rope, and pushed out from under the wharf into the stream.

He placed the oars in the rowlocks, and began pulling with all his might, and as he did so he heard the patter-patter of running feet.

The sentinels were coming.

The youth saw them looming up, and realized that he was not yet out of danger, for they of course possessed weapons, and would be within pistol-shot distance of him before he was out of sight.

It was considerably darker out on the water than on shore, however, and the youth did not believe the sentinels could hit him. If they did so, it would be an accident.

He continued to row as lustily as possible, and of a sudden he heard the crack, crack, of the pistols, and spat! one of the bullets hit the boat.

"Stop, or you are a dead man!" roared one of the redcoats. "Stop, I say!"

But he might as well have talked to the wind. Dick was not the youth to stop when there was a good chance to escape.

Crack! crack!

Again the pistol-shots rang out, and one of the bullets hit the oar on the right hand side and came near knocking it out of Dick's hand.

"That was a pretty close shave," thought the youth. "But I think I shall be out of pistol-shot distance before they can fire again."

The redcoats had only two pistols apiece, and as they would have to reload the single-barrelled weapons before they could fire again, they did not get another chance to try their marksmanship, for Dick was out of range completely a few minutes later.

The sentinels were disappointed, but had to bear it as best they could. There was only one thing to do, now that the boy had succeeded in getting away, and that was to

notify headquarters of it, and one of the two hastened away to do this.

He found the town in a turmoil. The streets were crowded with British soldiers, all looking for the escaped suspected "rebel." At headquarters, too, there was considerable excitement, and when Colonel Rahl was informed by the sentinel that the boy had made his escape, and was now rowing up the river in a boat, an exclamation of disappointment escaped his lips.

"That is too bad!" he cried. "I have just been informed by a loyal citizen, Mr. James Rudford, that the prisoner was no other than the famous Dick Slater, and we have let him slip through our fingers."

CHAPTER X.

DICK RETURNS AND REPORTS.

Mr. James Rudford, the Tory who had tried to capture Dick in the man's own home, as already detailed, was a very angry man when he regained his breath and feet, after having been downed by the "Liberty Boy."

He had seen the youth take his departure, and had taken note of the fact that the girl seemed glad to have the youth escape, and this did not tend to make his anger any the less bitter.

He hated to think that his own niece had aided and abetted a "rebel" spy in escaping, when he, her own uncle, was trying to capture him.

He upbraided the girl severely, and was surprised to find that she did not seem to be at all worried on account of having aroused his anger.

"I am glad that I helped Dick Slater escape, uncle!" said the girl. "And if you like you can go straight to the British commander and tell him that I aided the patriot in getting away."

"You know I won't do that, Martha," said the man, more mildly. "I would not like to get you into trouble. Indeed, I don't want the British to know you are a patriot, but it cuts me, nevertheless, to know that my own niece worked against me."

"Well, I am a patriot, and I am not ashamed to have it known," was the brave reply.

"It will be better not to have it known, though, Martha," was the reply, "for we don't know what the British might do if they knew you were a rebel. They would perhaps believe that I am also a rebel, and then they would likely take everything of value that we have in the house."

"True. Well, I shall not tell them."

Mr. Rudford managed to reach the door, although he was still bent forward at an angle of forty-five degrees, his stomach still paining him, and opening the door he looked out.

As he had expected, he could neither see nor hear anything of the fugitive.

"He has got safely away from this vicinity," said the man, "but he isn't out of Trenton yet, and I don't think he will be able to get out, either."

"I hope he may do so, uncle."

"Of course you do; but I don't. By the way, I will go to headquarters and tell Colonel Rahl who the rebel really was."

"How can you do that without telling that I am a patriot, uncle?"

"I'll tell the colonel that I once saw Dick Slater, and recognized him."

"And will you tell the colonel that Dick Slater was in the house?"

"Yes."

"How will you account for his being in here without telling about my part in the affair?"

"I will tell him that my niece opened the door when she heard the yelling, to see what it was about, and that the rebel pushed her aside, entered the house unceremoniously, and was making for the back-door, when I interfered, and tried to capture him."

Then Mr. Rudford hastened out of the house as fast as he could, and made his way to headquarters, where he secured an interview with Colonel Rahl, and told him the story he had told his niece.

Left alone, the girl uttered a sigh of relief, and murmured to herself:

"Oh, I'm so glad that I was instrumental in aiding Dick Slater to escape! I do hope he will get out of the town in safety."

Mr. Rudford was on his way back from headquarters when he learned that Dick Slater had succeeded in getting away in a boat, the sentinel having come along, and told the news to all as he came.

He went back to his home and told Martha that the "rebel" had succeeded in getting out of the town.

The girl was delighted, and said so.

"I am so glad he has escaped!" she exclaimed.

"Well, I'm not," was the growling reply, and then Mr. Rudford went to his room in a huff.

Martha Rudford lived in this house with her uncle and aunt, her parents being dead. Mrs. Rudford was an invalid, and the girl helped nurse her aunt. The lady was lying in her room, listening in some fear and excitement to the shouting and noises of all kinds that were being made outside, and when her husband came into the room she asked him what it was about. He explained that a "rebel" spy, who had been captured earlier in the evening had made his escape; but he did not tell her that the spy had been in their house and had been assisted in escaping by their niece.

Meanwhile Dick was pulling across the river in the boat.

He went diagonally, and then pulled steadily up the stream.

He kept as near the shore as possible, for by doing so he avoided having to pull against the current, which was strong out near the center of the stream.

An hour and a half later he reached the point where the boats were.

He found one of the patriot soldiers on guard, and was challenged.

He called out his name, and was soon on shore, and having tied the boat securely, he set out for the patriot encampment.

He walked the distance in an hour, and found that it was just midnight.

He went at once to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys," and as it was so late, he rolled himself up in his blanket and went to sleep. It would do as well to make his report in the morning. There was no hurry.

He went to headquarters immediately after breakfast, and was given a cordial greeting by General Washington.

"I hardly expected to see you back so soon, Dick," he said.

"For awhile, last night, I thought that I would not be back so soon, your excellency," was the reply.

"Why, how was that?"

"I was captured, sir."

"What! Captured again?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then how happens it that you are here this morning?"

"I was fortunate again, and succeeded in making my escape, sir."

"Well, you certainly seem to have a faculty for getting into trouble, and for getting out again, my boy!" the great man said.

"Yes. I have been having a bad run of luck lately, in so far as being captured is concerned; but I have had good luck in getting away again, as you say."

"Well, did you learn anything, Dick?"

"I did, sir. I learned something which will, I think, be sufficient for your needs."

"I am glad to hear that. Go on."

"I learned that Generals Howe and Cornwallis are not at the British encampment across the river."

"Where are they then?"

"I did not learn positively, but I was told they are in New York."

"What makes you think they are there?"

"Because one of the redcoats told me so."

"Ah, I see. They must be in New York."

"I think so."

"But I cannot understand why they have gone back there and left the army here," said the commander-in-chief, knitting his brows. "If they have given up the idea of trying to cross the river and attacking us, why did they not take the army back with them?"

"They haven't given up the idea of doing that, sir."

"They have not?"

"No."

"Then why did they return to New York?"

"To be where they can enjoy themselves while waiting for the river to freeze over."

An exclamation escaped Washington's lips.

"Ah, I understand," he said. "I don't see why I didn't think of that myself. Yes, that is the best course open to them. They can secure no boats, and could not hope to get across until they had boats built, and when the river freezes over it will be a simple matter to cross on the ice."

"Yes, your excellency."

"Well, you have done a good night's work, Dick, in learning this," said the commander-in-chief. "Now I shall know just what to expect."

"You know that there is no danger of an attack until after the river has frozen over."

"You are right; and that makes me easier in mind."

Then the commander-in-chief sent for the members of his staff, and explained to them what Dick had told him.

They were well pleased when they heard the news, and said it would simplify matters considerably.

As may well be supposed, the common soldiers, when they learned that there was no danger of an attack from the British, were relieved.

They were in no condition to offer battle to the king's soldiers.

They were only half-clothed, and did not have enough to eat, consequently were weakened. Many of them were down sick.

The news Dick had brought was very welcome, therefore. They would not be disturbed for some time in all likelihood, as the weather was not very cold as yet, and it would have to be very cold, and for quite a long period before the Delaware River would freeze hard enough to hold up a crossing army.

The soldiers questioned Dick eagerly, and were soon convinced that the news was reliable.

They cheered up quite a good deal after that, and were brighter and livelier than for some time past.

It was not that the patriot soldiers were cowardly; far from it. They simply realized that in their weakened condition, and with only half as many men as the enemy possessed, they would not be a match for the British. And knowing this, they were not eager for a battle.

For the first time in weeks there was some singing in camp that night.

After dinner Dick was with his comrades, "The Liberty Boys of '76," talking, and one of their number, Bob Estabrook, asked Dick if it would not be possible to cross the Delaware River some night and make an attack on the outposts of the British.

The young commander of the "Liberty Boys" thought awhile, and then said.

"Yes, I think it might be possible to do so, Bob."

"Good! Then let's try it, Dick."

"I'm willing to make the attempt if I can secure permission from the commander-in-chief," was Dick's reply.

"Then see him at once, Dick!"

"Yes, yes!" was the cry from all the youths, and Dick said he would see General Washington about the matter.

"Go at once," urged Bob. "Now is the time. Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day."

"All right. I'll go now."
And he did so.

CHAPTER XI.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" AT WORK.

As may be supposed, the "Liberty Boys" were on the anxious-seat while their commander was gone, and when he returned they looked at him eagerly and excitedly.

"What luck, Dick?"

"What did he say?"

"Did he give you permission to go?"

"Is it all right, Dick?"

"I hope he said 'yes'."

Such were a few of the questions and exclamations given utterance to by the youths.

Dick waited till they got through, and then said:

"Yes, it's all right, boys. He said we could go, if we would be very careful not to be too venturesome and get into trouble."

"Good!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good for the commander-in-chief!"

"Oh, we'll be careful."

"We'll teach the redcoats to be careful."

It was evident that the "Liberty Boys" were delighted.

They were young fellows of an average age of eighteen years, and camp life was too slow for them.

They were always ill at ease when in camp. They wanted to be up and doing.

They began getting ready for the work which was ahead of them—for they intended to cross the river that night.

They did not believe in delaying, when they were going to do a thing. Their idea was that if it was to be done at all it should be done at once, and then it would be out of the way.

So they got their weapons in good working order, laid in a supply of ammunition, and by the time supper was ready they were ready to start.

They ate their supper, and then waited till it was beginning to grow dark, and then they sallied forth.

The other soldiers knew what the "Liberty Boys" were going to try to do, and gave them cheers as they marched away into the timber and darkness.

The majority of the soldiers thought the youths were very foolish, however.

The idea of one hundred boys crossing the river with the intention of striking a blow at the enemy, numbering six thousand at least!

But then the "Liberty Boys" did not intend to attack the entire British army; their idea was to strike one or two of the outposts, and do some damage in this way.

Then, after doing this, they would seek safety in flight.

Being expert woodsmen, which the British were not, the youths felt that they would be able to escape without much difficulty.

They marched steadily along through the timber and snow, and finally reached the Delaware river.

They found half a dozen soldiers guarding the boats, and told them that they wished to use a sufficient number to carry them across.

It was found that ten boats would be sufficient, and half an hour later the youths were pulling across the river.

"Phew! It's cold to-night!" said Bob Estabrook, when they had got out on the river, where the wind from the north had full sweep at them.

"So it is," said Dick. "It will freeze quite a good deal, I think."

"Yes; most of the small streams are frozen over now."

"So they are, but it will have to be colder than it is, and stay that way for a couple of weeks before the Delaware will freeze hard enough to hold up the British soldiers."

"You are right."

The youths knew that the north wing of the British army lay straight across the river, so they headed slantingly across, with the intention of landing a mile or more up the river, beyond the extreme end of the north wing of the enemy's forces.

It was a long pull and a strong one, but at last they made a landing, and securing their boats, in a little cove made by a bend in the stream, they walked away, heading inland.

It was their intention to go inland a mile or so, and then make a half-circuit, and come in upon the enemy's lines from the rear.

It was their belief that the British, not suspecting an attack from any direction, would be careless, and it was believed, further, that least of all would they look for an attack from the New Jersey side of their encampment.

Onward the youths marched.

It was a dark night, and but for the snow on the ground they would scarcely have been able to see their hands before their faces.

As it was, they were enabled to make their way along tolerably well.

When they had gone perhaps a mile they paused, waited, and listened awhile, and hearing nothing, they turned and began making a half-circuit.

They walked onward for perhaps half an hour, and then paused and listened once more.

They believed that they must be getting near the enemy's picket-line.

It was decided that it would be best not to advance any further until it was learned just where the pickets were, and if possible, locate the outposts.

"I will go on a scouting expedition, fellows," said Dick. "Wait here till I come back."

"Well, but be sure you get back, Dick," said Bob.

"Oh, I'll be back in a few minutes."

"With a pack of redcoats at your heels, likely."

"Perhaps so; in case that proves to be true, be ready to give the enemy a warm reception."

"We will, never fear."

Then Dick stole away through the timber.

He moved slowly and cautiously, for he believed it could not be far to the picket line of the enemy.

He was right in this.

He had scarcely gone a quarter of a mile when during one of the pauses, which he made with frequency, he heard the crunching of snow under feet.

A sentinel was evidently there.

The "Liberty Boy" moved forward a little at a time, however, and was soon ensconced behind a tree, within ten yards of the beat of the sentinel he had heard.

As the soldier passed, Dick could make out his form without difficulty.

Beyond, and perhaps two hundred yards distant, was a campfire, and men were seated around it.

The youth judged that there were at least one hundred of the redcoats, and he was of the opinion that this was the chance he and his comrades were looking for. Here was an outpost of about their own number of men, and he believed they could make a successful attack and get away before the main force could get to where they were. And once out of musket shot distance the youth believed his "Liberty Boys" would be able to easily make their escape, barring accidents.

Having seen all that was necessary, Dick stole back to where his comrades were in waiting.

"Well?" remarked Bob, eagerly.

"I have located an outpost," said Dick, "and I think we can strike it a blow, and get away before the main force can get in firing distance of us."

"Good! And where is this outpost?"

"Straight ahead."

"How far away?"

"Not more than a quarter of a mile."

"All right. Let's get after the enemy."

The order was given to advance, but Dick warned them to go slowly, and be very careful.

"We must not permit our enemies to discover our approach until after we are within striking distance," he said.

"If we do we may not be able to do any damage."

"We'll be careful," was the reply from all, and then they began the advance.

They moved very slowly, and when they were close to the post of the sentinel Dick had seen they paused frequently, and listened.

They were standing, silent and motionless, behind trees, and within ten yards of the soldier's beat when he passed along, and then back again toward the other end, which was much farther away. It was the intention of the youths to wait till the sentinel reached the farther end of his post, and then dash forward, and pour one or more volleys right into the midst of the redcoats seated about the campfire.

This plan was followed out.

When the sentinel was almost to the end of his beat Dick gave the signal, and the "Liberty Boys" dashed forward, straight toward the camp-fire.

They did not make any more noise than was possible; as the snow was frozen on the surface, however, forming a crust, the crunching of their feet could be heard when they were near the campfire, and the redcoats leaped to their feet in alarm.

The "Liberty Boys" were within musket-shot distance, however, and at a word from Dick they paused, took quick aim, and fired.

Crash!

The volley rang out with terrible clearness and noise on the still night air, and immediately following the sound of the volley, groans, shrieks, and yells went up from the amazed and terrified British soldiers.

At least forty of their number had fallen, and so sudden had the blow fallen that for a few moments the British seemed hardly to know what to do. Then, just as the "Liberty Boys" fired a pistol-volley, the remaining redcoats up with their muskets, and fired a volley in return.

Two of the "Liberty Boys" fell, fatally wounded, and several more were hit, but not seriously hurt.

"Bring our wounded comrades, and come away quickly!" cried Dick; and eight of the youths handed their muskets to some of their comrades, and lifting the two wounded youths, bore them away as rapidly as was possible.

The other youths opened up and let the eight pass through with their burdens, and then closing in behind, moved just as fast as the eight could move, and reloaded their muskets as they went.

All was excitement in the British encampment.

The sound of the firing had been heard in the main camp, over by the river, and in a minute scores of soldiers were running toward the scene of action.

When they reached the outpost, and saw the havoc that had been wrought, they were wild with rage.

"Which way did they go?"

"Who were they?"

"How big a force is it?"

"How did it happen?"

Such were the excited questions, and the members of the outpost pointed in the direction the "Liberty Boys" had gone, and said:

"They have gone in that direction."

"After them!" roared an officer wearing the uniform of a captain. "After them! It can be but a small force, and we will kill or capture every rebel in it. After the scoundrels, I say."

CHAPTER XII.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" IN TROUBLE.

The "Liberty Boys," owing to the fact that they had to carry two wounded comrades, were not able to make as rapid progress as they would otherwise have done, but they

were determined not to leave their wounded friends behind. They would carry the two as long as they could do so, and when they could no longer keep up the retreat they would stand and fight to the last gasp.

Onward they moved as rapidly as possible, and they heard the yelling and shouting of the British soldiers, and knew that they were being pursued.

The "Liberty Boys" moved in a wide semi-circle, and by so doing they hoped to throw the enemy off their track, but they did not succeed.

Soon they heard the enemy on the lefthand side of them, and so they turned toward the right.

They had not gone far before the moon came out from behind some clouds; and lighted things up wonderfully.

This was something the "Liberty Boys" had not expected, and they realized that it was bad for them, as it would make it difficult for them to keep from being seen.

However, there was no help for it, and they continued onward with undiminished speed.

They were determined to escape, if such a thing was possible.

Presently they came to a creek, which they supposed emptied into the Delaware River somewhere in the vicinity.

It was a stream perhaps fifty feet in width, and if the ice should prove to be not thick enough to hold up the youths' weight they would have to turn and follow along the stream.

They decided to try to cross.

Two or three of the "Liberty Boys" ventured upon the ice, and although it cracked they got across safely.

Then the two parties of four each, carrying the wounded youths, set out to cross, and they managed to do so, although the ice cracked at an alarming rate, and bent under their weight.

The other youths started to cross, then, and just as they stepped upon the ice a party of redcoats came in sight.

"There they are," the youths heard the British soldiers yell. "Hurry, men, and we will have them at our mercy."

At this instant there was a cracking sound that was louder than any yet heard, and Bob Estabrook broke through. He went down to his armpits, but managed to catch hold of the edge of the ice and keep himself from going under.

"Jove!—help—me—out—s—somebody!" chattered Bob, for the ice-cold water had chilled him to the bone instant.

"I'll have you out in a jiffy, Bob!" cried Dick, seizing a

long stick, and extending it to Bob, who seized hold of it. "The rest of you boys stand the British off."

"All right, Dick!" was the reply.

The redcoats were close at hand, and coming fast, but the "Liberty Boys" stood their ground. They would hold the enemy off till Dick got Bob out of the water, or die in their tracks.

It was necessary to work carefully, in order to get Bob out of the water, for the ice was likely to keep crumbling off at the edge, but by exercising great care this was accomplished, and the "Liberty Boys" fired a volley at the approaching redcoats.

The volley was returned by the enemy, but the youths had scattered after firing, and by good luck they were not materially damaged, only a few slight wounds resulting, while the volley they had fired had dropped a dozen of the enemy.

The youths hastened across the stream, and by scooting along at good speed, they succeeded in getting over without any more of their number breaking in.

Then they hastened onward, after the two parties of four who were carrying the two wounded youths.

The redcoats were so eager to follow and wreak revenge on the "Liberty Boys" for the damage that had been done them that they were not so careful as the youths had been, and the result was that, having rushed upon the ice in a body, they broke through, and soon nearly the whole of their number were struggling in the water.

This was hard on the redcoats, but it was a good thing for the "Liberty Boys."

They felt that they were in serious trouble, at the best, and had it not been for the fact that their pursuers broke through the ice, thus being hindered greatly, they would undoubtedly have either been captured, or a portion of their force would have been killed.

Now, they stood a chance to make their escape, though rather a slim one, it must be acknowledged.

Onward they moved, as rapidly as possible, and they were pleased to note that there were not any soldiers in sight; nor could any be heard.

"I guess the plunge into the icy water put a damper on them," said Bob Estabrook, whose teeth were chattering, even though he was wearing two or three extra coats that had been given him by his comrades. Had it not been for this extra clothing the youth would have suffered severely, but with the clothing to help he gradually got warm again, the running aiding materially, as this kept his blood in circulation.

The trouble now was that the youths were going directly away from the point where their boats were hidden.

In order to get back across the river they must reach the boats, and it looked as if they would have hard work doing it.

The two wounded youths were groaning with pain. Their comrades carried them as gently as possible, but even then the poor fellows were shaken about, and jolted, and this caused intense pain. They bore it like the brave fellows that they were, however, and made no complaints.

Now that they had shaken the enemy off their trail, temporarily, at least, Dick decided to make another turn toward the left, and this was done.

They made a wide circuit, and when they had gone perhaps two miles they came upon a farm-house.

The thought came to Dick that if this was the home of a patriot, it would be a good thing to leave the two wounded youths there, and so he went to the door and knocked.

When the man appeared, Dick asked him which he was, patriot or Tory.

The man hesitated. It was evident that he did not like to commit himself.

Dick himself did not wear a Continental uniform; he had on the suit he had worn when playing the part of a spy in the lines of the British.

The majority of the youths had on the Continental blue, however, and the farmer happened to catch sight of one of these.

"I see you are patriot soldiers," he exclaimed, in a relieved voice. "I can truthfully say that I am a patriot, sir, but of course I have to be careful now, with the entire British army within a few miles of my home."

"True," said Dick. "Well, I am glad you are a patriot. I have a favor to ask of you."

"What is it?"

"We have a couple of wounded men here, and we wish to leave them with you. May we do so?"

"Certainly," was the reply. "We will receive them into our house, and will take the best possible care of them."

"We will be greatly indebted to you, sir," said Dick; then he told the youths who were holding the wounded "Liberty Boys" to carry them into the house.

Mr. Jerrold—such was the man's name, he said—led the way to a room on the ground floor, and the wounded youths were placed on pallets made on the floor. By leaving the door open between this room and the big sitting-room, the cheerful warmth from the big fire-place entered and made it comfortable indeed.

Mrs. Jerrold and her daughter Maggie soon came down

from upstairs, they having been in bed, but had dressed as soon as possible, after learning what was expected of them; and they hastened to get warm water ready, and cloths for bandages, and then Dick dressed the wounds of the two youths.

Meanwhile Bob had put in his time getting dry in front of the big fire-place, and by the time the work of dressing the wounds of his comrades was ended he was practically dry once more.

Dick explained how he and his comrades happened to be over in that part of the country, and Mr. Jerrold was loud in his praise of their daring and courage in venturing to make an attack on an outpost of the British when the main force was so close at hand.

"What shall I do if the British come here and find your two wounded comrades?" he asked.

"I hardly know," was the reply. "I hope they will not come and discover the presence of our comrades, but if they do you will just have to tell them that we forced you to take care of the wounded men."

"I may be able to keep them from knowing the two youths are here even if they should come," the farmer said. "If they don't enter the house I shall be able to keep the knowledge from them."

"You are right, sir, and perhaps if you claim to be a loyal king's man, they may not bother you."

Then Dick and his comrades went into the room where the two wounded youths were, and bade them good-by. They went in in parties of ten or a dozen, and they did their best to cheer the wounded youths up.

"You will be all right in a week or so," said Dick, cheerily. "Mrs. Jerrold and Miss Maggie will take the best of care of you, and you cannot help getting well."

"Indeed we will take care of them!" said Mrs. Jerrold, who was a good-hearted, motherly sort of woman. "We will see that they shall want for nothing."

Maggie, too, said she would help nurse the youths, and that if good nursing would bring them through they would certainly get well.

The wounded boys bore up bravely, and told their comrades to go along, and get back to the other side of the river and safety as quickly as possible.

"Don't worry about us," said one feebly. "We'll be all right."

Then the "Liberty Boys" took their departure, and not having to carry the wounded youths they were enabled to make good speed.

They reached the point where they had left the boats after an hour of swift walking.

But when they looked for the boats they found them gone!

CHAPTER XIII.

A DARING AND AUDACIOUS FEAT.

Instantly Dick suspected a trap.

Into his mind flashed the thought that somewhere near at hand were redcoats.

He thought it likely that at that very moment muskets were leveled at himself and comrades, and that at any moment might come the hail of death-dealing missiles.

Acting on the impulse of the moment, he cried out, quickly:

"Down upon your faces, boys! Down, quick!"

The youths were so accustomed to obeying Dick promptly and unquestioningly that they dropped upon their faces in the snow as if they had suddenly been stricken dead.

And not an instant too soon, either.

There was a crashing roar, as of a hundred or more muskets, and the bullets flew above the youths' heads by the score.

Had they not dropped just when they did half their number would have been killed by the volley.

As it was, not one was injured.

It was a narrow escape.

Even as it was, however, the youths were not yet out of danger.

Trouble seemed stalking abroad that night.

There were more than one hundred British soldiers concealed near at hand.

While searching for the "Liberty Boys," they had come upon the boats, and guessed at once that they belonged to the party they were in search of.

This gave them an idea.

Why should they not take the boats away, and then conceal themselves near at hand, and shoot down the "rebels" before they realized what was happening?

They had taken the boats, and sent them down to the town, where they would be safe from the "rebels," and then they had concealed themselves in some bushes and waited.

But by taking the boats away they had defeated their own plans.

As we have seen, the instant Dick saw the boats were gone he suspected that a trap had been set for him, that they were to be the victims of an ambush, and he had given

the order to drop on their faces; this order had saved the lives of at least two score of the youths.

But now they must do something, and quickly, or perish, Dick knew, and so he gave the order to leap to their feet and get behind trees.

This was done, and so quickly that the redcoats did not get a chance to fire a pistol-volley, though they tried to get their pistols out and cocked in time.

Now the affair was more even. The "Liberty Boys" were protected by the trees, the same as were their enemies; but the trouble was that the redcoats down in the main encampment would hear the firing and come to see what was going on. This would mean reinforcements for the enemy, and trouble and lots of it, for the "Liberty Boys."

Their young leader realized that it would not do to permit his little force to be caught between two fires, thus, and he at once sent the word around for the youths to begin falling back.

The "Liberty Boys" were so expert in woodcraft that they managed to get quite a distance before the British realized what was going on; when they did realize that their intended prey was giving them the slip, however, they were angry, and rushed excitedly forward, eager to get a chance to fire a volley.

But this was a bad move on their part. They were dealing with a party of youths, true, but the boys knew their business, and there was not such another dangerous set of men in the entire patriot army. As soon as Dick saw the British coming he gave the order for his boys to make a stand and give the enemy a volley, and they stopped, and cocking their muskets, waited for the redcoats to get near enough so the shots could be made effective.

They did not have to wait long.

The British were soon within range, and then the "Liberty Boys" took aim coolly and carefully, and when the word came for them to fire they did so.

Crash!

The volley rang out loudly, and it did wonderful execution, for seemingly half the pursuing force dropped to the ground, either dead or wounded.

Then on the night air rose shrieks, yells, and groans. Pandemonium seemed to have broken loose.

It was terrible—or would have seemed to be, to any save hardened veterans, accustomed to such scenes, and it was evident that the British were paralyzed.

Those who had not been wounded paused, and leaped behind trees.

They feared another volley, and they did not wish to be exposed to the bullets when they came.

They had had no idea that a party of "rebels" could be so dangerous. They had held "rebels" in more or less contempt, and many of those who had been killed or wounded had boasted that one British soldier was equal to three or four "rebels."

This, however, did not look like it. It would seem, judging from this, that a patriot was as good a soldier as a redcoat.

Seeing that the enemy was checked, and thoroughly checked at that, Dick gave the order for the "Liberty Boys" to continue the retreat.

They obeyed, and stole away rapidly and silently, leaving the redcoats standing tremblingly behind trees, afraid to stick their heads out, for fear they might get bullets through them.

Bob Estabrook wanted to go back and finish the entire force of redcoats, but Dick said it would not be wise to do this; he said that the British in the main encampment had heard the firing, and would come to investigate, and that it would be dangerous to linger long in the vicinity.

"We had better make our escape while we can," he said. "We might regret it if we went back."

"That's right," Bob agreed. "I never thought of that."

So the youths continued onward, and when they had gone a mile or so they stopped and held a council.

The question to be decided was, How should they get back across the Delaware river?

The British had their boats, and they were sure there were no more within ten miles in either direction. What, then, should they do?

"Let's get our boats back," said Bob Estabrook.

"Yes, that's the talk!" said Mark Morrison. "Let's show the redcoats we are not the kind of fellows that can be easily beaten."

"Yes, let's do that, Dick," from Sam Sanderson.

Their leader was silent for a few moments, thinking.

He was studying the matter in all its phases, and figuring on the possibilities for making a success.

He suspected the boats had been taken down to the river-front, near the town, and felt that it would be a difficult and dangerous matter to try to recapture them.

Still, he was like his comrades, in that he did not like to go away and leave the British in undisputed possession of the boats.

There was danger that the British might use the boats to cross the river and make an attack on the patriot army; and it would be terrible, Dick reasoned, if this happened.

He would never forgive himself if this should occur, for he would always feel that it was the fault of himself and

comrades, as it could not have happened had they not come across to the New Jersey side in the boats.

No, he decided that it would not do to go away and leave the boats in the possession of the enemy.

"We will recapture the boats, boys," he said presently, in a grim, determined voice. "We will recapture them or die trying."

"Hurrah! that's the way to talk!" cried Bob Estabrook, who was always eager for any dangerous and desperate enterprise—and the more dangerous and desperate it was the better he liked it.

This having been decided, the next thing was to decide upon ways and means.

It would be a difficult matter to steal the boats right out from under the noses of the British, and get away in safety with them, and it would necessitate careful work.

It would be necessary to have some plan decided upon, and the plan would have to be adhered to in every particular.

The first thing that was settled was that they must wait till the small hours of the morning before making the attempt to get the boats.

This having been settled, they made their way in the direction of the home of Mr. Jerrold.

It was less than half an hour's walk, and as Mr. Jerrold was sitting up, watching over the two wounded "Liberty Boys," he came to the door promptly when Dick knocked.

He was surprised when he saw the youths were back again, but when Dick explained the reason for it he told them to come in, and make themselves comfortable in front of the big fireplace.

"You can stay here till you are ready to start for Trenton," he said, and the youths were glad to take advantage of his offer, for it was quite cold out.

They went in and asked the wounded youths how they were getting along, and received the assurance that the two were doing as well as could be expected.

One of the two, who was not so seriously wounded as the other, wanted to hear what the youths had been doing, and Dick told him. He expressed great pleasure when he learned that his comrades had got the better of the redcoats in the encounter.

The "Liberty Boys" remained at the home of Mr. Jerrold till two o'clock, and then took their departure. It would be an hour's walk to Trenton, and so they would reach there at somewhere near three o'clock.

They walked briskly, until within a quarter of a mile of the edge of Trenton, and then they paused, and Dick told

them to remain where they were while he and Bob went on a tour of investigation.

The youths said they would, and Dick and Bob set out.

They walked slowly and cautiously, and after an hour of spying and reconnoitering they found a point, about midway between the north wing of the British army, and the main force at Trenton, where they believed it possible for their force to slip through and reach the river-front.

The two youths did not have much difficulty in getting through, and then they stole along till they had located the two sentinels who had posts along the river-front.

Watching their chances, Dick and Bob lay in wait for the redcoats, and knocked each senseless with the butt of a pistol, and then gagged and bound them. This was not very well done, owing to the fact that the youths had nothing to bind the prisoners with save pocket handkerchiefs, and these were scarcely adequate. Still, as the two British soldiers were unconscious, and might not come to for quite a while, the "Liberty Boys" thought it might be all right.

They placed the prisoners in one of the boats, which were found near at hand, and then they hastened back to tell the "Liberty Boys" to come.

They were not long in reaching the spot where their comrades were awaiting them, nor were they long in getting back, even though they had to exercise care in slipping between the north wing and the main force of the British army, but they were long enough to cause themselves more trouble, for as they reached the boats they saw the two sentinels were gone; and just as they made this discovery they heard a noise, and looking up the street saw a party of redcoats coming toward them on the run.

CHAPTER XIV.

SOME GOOD LUCK.

The sentinels had recovered their senses shortly after Dick and Bob took their departure; but they were so confused that they did not realize their position at first, and it was several minutes before they did so and acted.

Then they rose to their feet—which had not been bound, and leaping ashore, ran in the direction of a building up the street, where they knew they would find comrades engaged in playing cards. As they ran they worked at their bonds, and soon succeeded in freeing their arms. This

done, they quickly tore the gags from their mouths, and by this time they were at the building.

They rapped on the door, and yelled to their comrades, and soon the door was opened, and they told what had happened quickly and excitedly.

There were perhaps thirty men there, for it was a sort of clubroom, and they seized their muskets, and accompanied the two sentinels back toward the river. They were smart enough to know that the sentries had not been made prisoners and placed in the boat for nothing.

When they were within a hundred yards of the boats they caught sight of the "Liberty Boys," and setting up a yell, increased their speed, and ran as fast as they could.

The "Liberty Boys" saw that it was only a small force, and instead of leaping into the boats and taking flight, they decided to stand their ground, and give the enemy a surprise.

So they cocked their muskets, and sheltering themselves behind the embankment—there being quite a steep bank to the river at this point, they waited for the British to come within range.

They did not have long to wait.

When the redcoats were within range Dick ordered the youths to take aim.

They leveled their muskets.

The redcoats at this moment became aware of the fact that the "rebels" were standing their ground.

This startled them, and they came to a sudden stop.

Too late, however; they were within range.

"Fire!" cried Dick.

The youths obeyed.

Crash! roar! the weapons rang out on the still night air, and this was followed immediately by shrieks and yells, intermingled with which were groans of men in terrible pain.

The volley had been very destructive.

At least twenty of the thirty who had been standing erect a moment before were down, dead and wounded, and of those who remained on their feet the majority had wounds of a more or less serious character.

They stood for one moment, paralyzed by the terrible havoc around them, and then turning, they fled at the top of their speed yelling at the highest pitch of their voices.

It was their desire to arouse the encampment, and in this their yelling assisted; but the volley which had been fired by the youths would have been sufficient without anything more.

The British leaped out of their bunks in alarm, and

seizing their weapons, sallied out to learn the meaning of the musketry.

They quickly discovered what it meant, and soon hundreds of British soldiers were hastening toward the point where the captured boats had been tied.

As may be supposed, however, Dick and his "Liberty Boys" were not there waiting to be shot down. They had leaped into the boats and pulled away as rapidly as possible, just as soon as they saw the remnant of the little force had taken to flight.

So by the time the camp was aroused and the redcoats were approaching the river-front by the hundreds, the "Liberty Boys" were out of sight in the darkness hovering over the Delaware River.

The British soldiers were very angry to think that the despised "rebels" had dared enter their lines, shoot down some of their men, and then recapture the boats and get away in them in safety.

It was the most daring thing they had ever heard of in all their experience as soldiers.

Colonel Rahl was aroused by the furore, and when he was told what had occurred he was very angry, and threatened what he would do if ever he got a chance at the "rebels."

Talk, however, never did do any good, and this case was no exception to the rule. It may have relieved the colonel's feelings somewhat, but that was all.

Meanwhile Dick and his "Liberty Boys" were rowing slantingly across the river.

They were in good spirits.

They had got into trouble that night on one or two occasions, but they had managed to come out all right in the end.

They had lost their boats, but had regained them, and so they were well satisfied.

Then, too, they had inflicted considerable damage upon the British, and had not suffered much themselves.

Two of their number had been seriously wounded, and a number had slight wounds, but that was all, as against a goodly number of the enemy, dead and wounded.

"I think we got the better of to-night's work, all around," said Dick, who was discussing the matter with Bob Estabrook.

"Yes, I think so, Dick," agreed Bob. "But I thought for a while that we would have to swim back across the river."

"We could not have done that. We would have had to manage in some other way."

"How could we have done?"

"I don't know; perhaps we might have gone up the river a dozen miles or so, and found a boat, in which we could have got across finally."

It was almost daylight when the youths reached the point where the flotilla of boats were tied, and disembarking, they made the ten boats fast, and exchanging a few words with the sentinel, they set out for the patriot encampment.

This was an hour's walk, and when they got there it was broad daylight.

Of course, they had no difficulty in passing the sentinel, who recognized them at once, and half an hour later they were sound asleep, wrapped in their blankets, in their quarters.

They slept till noon, and then got up, and cooked and ate their dinners.

The commander-in-chief had heard of the return of the "Liberty Boys," and sent the orderly to tell Dick to come to headquarters.

The youth went at once.

"Well, what luck did you have last night, over on the enemy's side of the river, Dick?" asked the commander-in-chief.

"Very good luck, taken all around, sir," was the reply. "It was mixed, however. We had bad and good luck, both, but eventually it turned out that we had the best of it."

"Tell me about it, Dick."

The youth did so, and when the commander-in-chief heard of how the British had captured the ten boats, he shook his head and looked grave.

"It is fortunate that you recaptured the boats, my boy," he said. "Otherwise, had the British retained them, they could have crossed and made an attack upon us."

"That is what I knew, sir," said Dick, "and that is the reason we made an attempt to regain the boats."

"It certainly was a daring thing to do, and I judge that for that very reason, more than any other, it was successful."

"Quite likely, sir. Well, I am glad we got the boats away from the enemy."

"And so am I. I am glad, also, that you succeeded in doing the enemy some damage. I am not eager, ever, for the shedding of human blood, but in this case I am glad, for the British have pursued us relentlessly and deserved what they got."

That is the way I look at it, sir."

"Yes, indeed."

After some further conversation Dick saluted and left

the great man's presence, and returned to where the "Liberty Boys" were.

The youths were eager to hear what General Washington had to say about their work of the night before.

Dick told them the commander-in-chief was well pleased with what they had done.

"Then we'll go again and do some more of the same kind of work," said Bob Estabrook.

"Yes, indeed," from Mark Morrison.

"We will have to wait a few days, though, fellows," said Dick. "The British will be all stirred up over this work that we did last night, and will be on the lookout for us for awhile."

The youths saw the wisdom of this statement, and said they would be willing to wait awhile.

They let a week pass, and then, one dark night, they again went across the river, and struck the British outpost another blow, much after the fashion of the first time they had ventured over there.

And as on the former occasion, they had a lively time of it, and were chased quite a distance, but they managed to make a wide circuit, and escape from their pursuers.

As soon as they were sure they had shaken the redcoats off their track they headed in the direction of the home of Mr. Jerrold, as they were anxious to learn how their two wounded comrades were getting along.

They were given a hearty welcome by Mr. and Mrs. Jerrold and Maggie, and they were made happy by the news that both wounded youths were getting along all right.

"They'll get well, I am sure," said Mr. Jerrold.

When the wounded "Liberty Boys" saw their comrades their eyes brightened, and it was seen that they were delighted.

They asked many questions, and the youths answered promptly, and all hands were happy.

"We'll soon be strong enough to rejoin the company, Dick," said one of the youths.

"I hope so," was the reply.

There was some further conversation, and then Dick told the youths they must be going.

Bidding the two wounded "Liberty Boys" and the members of the Jerrold family good-by, the youths set out, and an hour and a half later reached the river at the point where they had left the boats.

The redcoats had not found and taken the boats away, this time, and the "Liberty Boys" embarked, and returned to the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River.

They were greatly elated, for they had had good success,

and had not lost a single man, though several bore wounds to show as a result of the encounter with the British.

They did not mind this, however, for they had given the redcoats a thrashing and were happy.

General Washington was glad to hear that they had again been successful in damaging the enemy, and he felt that this would have the effect of making the British more careful, and less likely to make strenuous efforts to get across and attack the patriot army, as they would expect a desperate defense to be made, and they would not have much desire to fight a hard battle in the severe winter weather.

It was quite cold, but the Delaware was so wide, and flowed so swiftly, that it seemed as if it was not destined to freeze over at all that winter. It was frozen for many yards out into the stream from either shore, and especially in sheltered spots, where the bends made it impossible for the northern winds to ruffle the water, but it was very far from being frozen clear across.

Christmas drew near, and General Washington began planning to strike the British.

His idea was to cross the Delaware River in the boats and strike the British centre at Trenton, and he did so. He crossed the river on Christmas night, with two thousand five hundred men, and marched against Trenton and captured the town, and secured one thousand Hessians. Colonel Rahl was killed in the little engagement on that morning.

Dick met Martha Rudford in Trenton, and spent a couple of very pleasant hours in her company.

The two "Liberty Boys" who had been wounded, and who had been at the Jerrold home, came to Trenton, well as ever, and rejoined the company, and Joe Holbert, one of the two, told Dick that sweet Maggie Jerrold had promised to be his wife if he lived through the war and came for her.

He did get through the war alive, and they were married within two months of the day Joe was mustered out.

THE END.

The next number (111) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' JUBILEE; OR, A GREAT DAY FOR THE GREAT CAUSE," by Harry Moore.

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